

BEACONS
OF THE
BIBLE

by
HENRY LAW

CONTENTS

- Preface
- The Serpent
- Eve
- Cain
- Lamech
- Enoch Unheeded
- Ungodly Alliance
- The Spirit Striving in Vain
- Flood of Evil
- Flood of Waters
- The Raven
- Drunkenness
- Filial Impiety
- Babel
- Abraham in Egypt at Gerar
- Lot
- Sarah's Unbelief
- Cities of the Plain
- Lot's Wife
- Ishmael Mocking
- Ishmael Cast Out
- Esau
- Rebekah
- Joseph's Brethren
- Death

PREFACE

To the citizens of Gloucester

Dearly Beloved,

Allow a few words to premise my purpose in thus approaching you.

I am constrained by feelings fervent—affectionate—deep-seated. Let gratitude be first named. I should indeed be heartless, if I were untouched by kindness: and I should be worse than heartless, if not moved exceedingly, when kindness is exceeding. I came a stranger to you, but I received not a stranger's welcome. Expecting courtesy, I was met by friendliness. Advancing days have not diminished this happy brotherhood. Increased communion augments my weight of thankfulness. Acknowledgment then is due. I give it as I can. To give it as I would, baffles my power.

Next, duty bids me thus speak. I owe you service in the holiest sense. I hold a spiritual office. I am here to promote the interests of your immortal souls. All other purposes of residence among you vanish before this absorbing thought. I am placed in your midst to help you on a heaven-ward

course. I have indeed no priestly eminence. The Gospel knows no priest, except Jesus within the veil at God's right hand. My highest station is to be your servant in the Lord. My highest work is to minister to you God's Word. My highest privilege is to deal closely with your souls. My highest happiness is to win these souls to Christ. Hence the main efforts of my lip and pen are rightly yours. In partial payment of this debt, I draw near in these pages. If they, the Spirit helping, should do Christian work, your claims will not be wholly undischarged.

Next, intense desire should not be silent. Duty is a cold term for ardent feeling. A lukewarm ministry is a withering blight. It is an iceberg in the Church. It freezes and deadens. But can lips be cold which speak of heaven—of hell—of never-dying souls—of God's everlasting love in Christ! With such themes hearts should glow—words should burn—arguments should put forth giant-strength—entreaties should agonize. Every faculty should grapple with individual men, refusing to let them go until they give themselves to God in Christ. I sincerely would show such longing towards you. Away with indifference when such interests are at stake! If you should not be saved, your life is misery—your death is ruin. Your trade may prosper—your health may flourish—your friends may smile—outward advantages may abound. But the end is near. What will that end be! I know this. Can I then speak with chilly apathy? I would that these pages, as a flame of strong desire, could reflect the Savior's zeal.

These are the feelings urging me to present a series of Beacons to you. The subjects are wholly scriptural. The Bible is the mine supplying every stone of the simple fabric. On each is inscribed, "Thus says the Lord." Thus I would call your minds to the study of God's Word. The Bible is the richest treasure of the world. Without it the palace is a dark blank. With it the humble cottage sparkles with celestial light. It is the transcript of God's heart. It tells, what reason is weak to find, our Heavenly Father's will. It is pure truth without one shade of error. The Spirit's pen composes the whole. It gives knowledge on all things needful for time and for eternity. It is a safe guide through life's entangled path. It is a compass through shoals and rocks—amid winds and waves—to heaven's eternal rest. The sage is ignorant without it. The peasant learns from it salvation's road. It is a solace for every hour. It is a companion always ready to converse. It cheers when other comforts fail. It is arrayed in every charm for intellect. It never wearies. It is always fresh. Its oldest truths cannot grow old. Its readers become more wise—more holy. Other books may puzzle and corrupt. This is from heaven, and leads to heaven. This enters the heart with purifying grace. The Savior prays, "Sanctify them through your truth: Your word is truth:" John 17:17. Hence I would win you to be Bible-students. What, if the study so enchants and so enchains, that other writers, in comparison, are paled! You become gainers in understanding and joy. In the place of earthly things surrendered, you receive a heavenly substitute. Man's silence is no loss, if God arise and speak.

Next attention is here called to Genesis. Where all is marvelous and all divine, no part can have surpassing worth. But this book asks primary notice, as the oldest history in the world. It reveals wonders otherwise forever hid. The Prince of Reformers deliberately said, "There is nothing more beautiful, nothing more useful." I pause not to enumerate its special charms. But I may truly state, the more you search, the more your minds will wonder, and your hearts will love. Read it as literally true. Then no human philosophy will beguile. Ponder its characters. You will find on them the intrinsic stamp of truth. You will soon feel, the pen which depicts is not of man. He only who made the heart can thus anatomize.

Object not, that I select the dark side of each picture. Sin must be known, before the grace of God can be prized. The remedy is not for the healthy. My first purpose is to unmask sin. I would show it, as our direst enemy—the cause and origin of all our woe—the spring of misery in earth and hell. Thus I present a mirror exhibiting its dreadful prevalence. I take this stand to deepen abomination of this evil. But mistake me not. I urge you not to flee sin—that by sinlessness you may earn heaven. This would indeed be to mock man's misery—and to offer poison in a deluding cup. Would he not be mad, who bade gravestones to move—or nature to frame wings to soar above the skies! I would be madder, if I taught, that sin hated was sin expiated—if I proclaimed, that present doings could undo past guilt. Our best is but deficiency. Deficiency has no surplus of merit—but rather desert of wrath. No! I would scare from sin, that you may seek

refuge in Christ. These pages will attain their end, if by the Spirit's help, they bring you from sin—from self—from each vain confidence to Him. All perish who are not one with Him. This oneness in individual souls is only by faith—the gift of grace—the Spirit's mighty work.

Accept, then, these Beacons as assurance of sincere desire that you should be the happiest among the happy—the most joyous among the joyful—the most holy among the holy—the most godlike among the godly—the most saintly among the saints—the most heavenly-minded among the heavenly—the most glorious among the glorified. This state of grace will be in proportion as you dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. May your souls be wholly swallowed up in Him! Then your sins are all forgiven—and blessed will be life's little speck—glorious will be heaven's eternal day.

I know you dwell amid grand reminiscences and holy privileges. You boast that Hooper was yours, who witnessed in flames for Christ's pure cause—that Miles Smith was yours, who gave us, rendered in our own tongue, a large portion of God's Word—that the noble Whitfield was born your citizen—and aged men still tell of your Ryder's saintly walk. Your admiring eyes rest on a splendid church—the county's pride. The frequent bell calls you to public prayers. Let these things be duly valued. But they are mere externals, and as such fall short of grace. Husks are not the fruit, although they may hold it. Salvation is an inward work. May it be yours! May He whose love sent Christ to save, smile savingly on you!

Among the redeemed may none outshine you in the crown
of Jesus!

I have the honor to be,

Your faithful servant,

Henry Law, May, 1868

THE SERPENT

"The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field."
—Genesis 3:1

Evil is universally present. It lives in every climate—in every age—in every heart. There is no place exempt. Every soil is profuse with its luxuriance. Each period is its era. Other things vary; but, in all varieties this uniformity prevails. While great diversity marks the intellect, and powers, and characters of men, each and all breathe this common atmosphere, and wear this common dress.

The thought naturally arises, "How could this monster first spring into life? Who is the author of its being? Where is its cradle?" It is, however, the part of wisdom quickly to check enquiries, which might exercise forever, but must forever elude, our search. The mystery of sin's birth is shrouded in impenetrable clouds. It lies beneath unfathomable depths. It sits above heights inaccessible. The dreadful story is buried from our sight. The secret is not unveiled on earth. It is vain, then, to grope in darkness. It is folly to speculate, when the utmost gain must be disappointment. Thought and time are lost, when we pursue a fleeting phantom. They, who pass from guess to guess on this subject, find that their progress is from

ignorance to ignorance. How sin gained its first breath must be unknown, until the day of larger revelations.

But while we give no heed to speculations, which only darken knowledge, it becomes us to ponder reverently the revelations of our Bible. We have a record of sin's descent upon our world. Its introduction into man's heart is related. The story indeed is brief. Only a few black lines are drawn. The full portrait is not filled up. But the dreadful transaction is disclosed—and it affects us too closely to permit indifference. Let us, then, draw near, with solemn minds. And may the one great Spirit of eternal truth guide our feet into rich pastures of sanctifying wisdom!

Creation, springing from the Creator's hand, was perfect. It was worthy of the all-good Maker. "God created man in his own image—in the image of God created he him:" Genesis 1:27. "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," Genesis 1:31. The wisdom, love, and power of God could not have raised a fairer fabric.

Thus Eden's garden surpassed improvement. Our first parents—pure in holiness—rich in every grace—the unsullied reflection of God's own nature—moved amid perfect scenes. The glory of their state was this, they were the image of God. This was the glory of their dwelling, God pronounced it to be "very good." Thus earth needed not accession of delight. Man joyed in all around him—all within him—all above him. Around was every charm—

within was happy innocence—above was a smiling Father. God was everywhere—in everything.

Believer, while you marvel at this dazzling brightness, remember, there is something inconceivably better in store for you—bless God for your heavenly hope.

Eden's sun is soon eclipsed. This bright day soon darkens. The flowers of this garden soon fade. Into this Paradise the Serpent comes. Simple are the words which introduce the monster. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." He appears—and his work soon betrays him. The work is subtle evil. This fact alone establishes that he is more than his assumed form pretends. In semblance he is one of the beautiful creatures, sporting in this garden's paths. But they are irrational, gifted only with the limited powers of instinct. But here is one, who, seeming to be a serpent, uses speech, and reasons with consummate skill, and evidences the depths of evil. He must be more than mere serpent, who has more than a serpent's powers and wiles. Thus the conclusion is approached, that the devil, to accomplish his vile ends, hides himself beneath this mask—clothes himself in this shape—decks himself with the unsuspected features of a creature of Paradise.

The Spirit of God attests this fact. Speaking of the devil, He names him "old serpent." Unveiling some of the terrific wonders of the last days, He says, "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan" Rev. 12:9. And again, "I saw an angel come down from heaven,

having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand—and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." 20:1, 2. The Spirit, foreshowing Satan's ruin, names him, as the creature in whose form he here appears. The old Serpent, which shall be destroyed, is the devil. The old Serpent, then, which crept into Paradise, is the devil.

Paul adds his heaven-taught confirmation. Surely the devil is before his eye, when he warns the Corinthians, "lest, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety," so their minds should be corrupted. 2 Cor. 11:3.

Thus the disguise drops—the mask falls—the veil is withdrawn—the deception is detected—the plot is discovered—the sleight is discerned—the treachery is disclosed—the trickery is visible. This is no harmless creature. This is not one of a beauteous tribe, ignorant of evil. This agent belongs not to a race of living ones, declared by God to be "very good."

Here is the devil—that apostate spirit—that accursed being—that arch-rebel—that daring adversary of God—that merciless foe of man. Eden's Serpent truly is the devil. His work declares him. God's word denounces him.

Taking, then, our stand upon this indisputable fact, let us humbly pray the great Teacher of the Church to press upon our hearts the obvious warnings.

1. The devil is a real person. The devil is no myth—no dream—no vision—no fable—no allegory. It narrates the real conduct of a real person. It is no fictitious tale. It is not amusement for imaginative minds. It is no stage, on which imagination may blow bubbles. All is historic verity and unvarnished fact. Here are the doings of an actual living being. As God truly is—and Christ truly is—and the Holy Spirit truly is—and we truly are—just so the devil truly is. Works prove a workman. Acts show an agent. So real performances stamp a real devil.

Reader! these are days in which proud reason sneers at ancient verities, and regards Bible-statements as materials for the construction of airy palaces of conceit. Be not deceived. As the Serpent beguiled Eve, so now he beguiles unstable minds. As he persuaded her to view him as a friendly counselor, so he persuades them to regard him as a shadowy semblance of some vague mystery. Listen not to such fond dreams. The Bible begins not with enigmas. It is not constructed to puzzle and perplex. Trifle not with the faithful statement but be assured, that there is no truth more tremendously true, than the existence of a personal devil. Watch then, and pray. He is always personally near; for he "walks about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet.

5:8. Bar the portals of your heart. He seeks to make that heart his personal home. He is the "spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." Eph. 2:2.

2. The devil is a hater of God. Who hates God most? Surely he who most contravenes His will. Of the devil's

antecedent rebellion, nothing should be said, for nothing can be proved. But here a patent fact evidences his enmity. He aims directly to upset God's plans. He arms himself in the panoply of bold opposition. He sees the divine arrangement, and he sets himself to disarrange it. He views creation bright in every beauty, and he plots to soil it. He marks the birth of an eternity of pure delights, and he arises to infuse the element of misery. God had made man in His own likeness. Satan comes forward to destroy the holy image, and to transform the heavenly work into fuel for his hell. He seems to reason— 'Man is formed to show forth God's praise, and to be His delight. But this benevolence shall fail. Man shall be robbed of innocence; he shall be debased into a rebel, fallen as I am—an object fit only for abhorrence. Thus he schemes—thus he uplifts his arm boldly to fight against God. See, then, how he hates God.

Reader! you profess to love God. Where is your evidence? Do you abhor the fiend, who from the beginning has strained his every power to subvert God's kingdom? Do the warm feelings of your heart respond, 'I hate him who hates my God—God's foes are my foes—His friends my friends—I avow myself to be His soldier and His servant—I march beneath the banner of the God of heaven against the legions of the god of this world?'

3. The devil is a hater of man. Who hates man most? Surely he who most contrives his misery. In Eden there was sweet bliss. Every faculty was the inlet of God. Every thought—full of Him—was only joy. The morning

dawned to bring God near. The day advanced to bring Him nearer. The closing evening closed not the communion. Sinless man lived in the raptures of heavenly converse. His breast was cloudless sunshine. Satan beholds and writhes— "What! shall man share the peace which I have lost; and rejoice in joys, which never can be mine again?" Such bliss is torture to him. He will not rest until he uproot it. Such happiness stings him, as a gnawing worm. He must destroy it. He dwells in wretchedness—and he now comes to drag down others to his level. Earth had never heard a sigh nor seen a tear, until this enemy of happiness appeared. Since that day pains and anguish have run a ceaseless course. His aim was to create misery, and mercilessly he succeeded. See, then, how he hated man.

Sad that the sons of men should lend their ears so gladly to their deadliest foe, and drink so readily this viper's poison! What madness to court the embrace of such an enemy—to admit the sure murderer to our abode—to open the door to the known robber! This is their madness, who fondle this hater of our race.

4. The devil is most daring. Truly nothing daunts him. His case is *hopeless*, therefore he is *reckless*. Paradise was divinely pure, but still undaunted he rushes in. When man was heavenly as heaven, boldly he addresses him. Is he more timid now? Far otherwise. There is no place so pure, that his foot fears to tread it. There is no holiness so holy that he ventures not to touch. His hand will open the sacred gate—his foot will pass the boundary of every sacred enclosure. The sanctity of Jesus scared him not. No

heaven-appointed ordinances repel his step. He whispers to the praying saint. He mounts the pulpit-steps. He joins the worshipers in hallowed courts. He is by the side at sacramental feasts. Sacred is the saint's dying chamber; but he shoots his arrows there. His daring cannot be exceeded.

Believer, labor to grow in grace. Each day put on more of the Lord Jesus. Agonize for nearer conformity to His image. Fly with quicker wing to the heights of holiness. But bear in mind, that as you rise, the tempter will pursue you still.

5. The devil is consummate in skill. He watches for the appropriate opportunity; and then applies the suitable snare. Eve is alone—then he is by her side. In Adam's presence the bait could not be laid. If Adam's counsels could be sought, the bait could not succeed. The only opportunity is adroitly seized.

Next mark the artfully-constructed snare. The object is to introduce sin. Sin is transgression of God's command. Our parents had free permission of full enjoyments. In this permission there is no door for disobedience. But there is one—only one prohibition. If guilt can enter, it must be by this path. The trial shall be made. The seducing words are few; but they comprise all deceitfulness.

A DOUBT is first insinuated. "Has God said?" Is it truly so? There may be some mistake. A spark to kindle DISCONTENT next falls. "You shall not eat of every tree." Is this consistent with unbounded kindness? Why

this arbitrary limit?—A bold DENIAL of danger follows. "You shall not surely die." It is a futile threat. A promise of abundant gain crowns the lure. "Your eyes shall be opened." The skill is perfect.

Reader! beware. He, who tempts you this day, has not declined in subtlety. No, the experience of long ages, if possible, sharpens his cunning. The school of incessant practice teaches him to cast the net more craftily. He ever has been, and ever will be, matchless in deception.

6. The devil shrinks not from the blackest sin. His first appearance shows that there is no iniquity so foul, but he will handle it; no depth of evil so profound, but he will fathom it. He commences with trampling down all truth. "You shall not surely die." He rises upon earth the meridian orb of crime. He blushes not—nor trembles—nor pauses—nor scruples. His earliest words are the lie of lies. So now he allures each victim to the extremest extremity of evil. He never will forbear, while he can plunge them deeper in sin's abyss. The vilest iniquities are most congenial to his nature. Reader! go not one step with him. There is no finality in his downward course.

7. The devil has dreadful power. Weak agents fail. Difficulties baffle them. But Satan is not baffled. His first victory was hard to win. But he quickly won it. Eve had no inward proneness to yield. No inborn corruption betrayed the portals of her heart. Her citadel was firm in walls and bars of innocence. But still he succeeded. He gained

admission, and set up his throne of conquest. Can there be clearer proof of his transcendent powers?

Reader! beware. All his mighty arts plot your destruction. The innocent fell, when attacked only from without. How can you stand, when a legion of traitorous desires are ready to surrender? His outward solicitations are aided by your inward lusts. If you escape, a stronger than this strong one must befriend you.

Such is the Serpent's appearance in Eden. Here the description ceases. Other Scriptures unfold a lengthened roll of his malignant might. As man's history advances, his cruelty and wiles swell into more frightful form. Our annals are a vast catalogue of his foul exploits. The first picture presents only this broad outline. But it is a clear display of his reality—his hatred to God and man—his daring—his skill—his deep iniquity, and his tremendous power. Believer, you may view him and still smile. This conqueror is conquered. Captivity is led captive. The spoiler is spoiled. This strong one is bound. You are rescued. You are safe. True, he will often assail, affright, roll you in the mire, and wound your peace—but he cannot destroy. His might is great—but your Almighty deliverer is far greater. His hosts are many—your one Jesus Himself is infinitely more. He indeed desires to have you, and his efforts are terrible and incessant; but your Jesus ever lives to pray for you, and His prayers are ever heard. Therefore, go forward, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done

all to stand." Eph. 6:13. Fear not. Fear not, Christ is with you. Be not dismayed, He is your God. Resist this foe, and he will flee. James 4:7. Raise the banner of the cross, and he will tremble. Wash in the blood, and he cannot touch you. Cry to the Captain of Salvation, and all heaven aids you. Thus go on your heavenward way rejoicing. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. 16:20. In Christ you may victoriously shout, "Oh my enemy, your destructions are come to a perpetual end. You have wounded, but Christ has healed. The death brought in by you, brightens through Christ into eternal life."

EVE

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and ate, and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

Genesis 3:6

Eve stands on a dark pinnacle. She is the first to sin. Thus she poisons the spring of all following life—and plants upon earth the tree upon which humanity hangs, as a blighted branch. Such is her sad pre-eminence.

Who has not shudderingly pondered the fruits of her transgression! It slew innocence—banished peace—cut all the roots of happiness—expelled God from the heart. It opened wide the floodgates of guilt and fear. It brought in an accusing mind, and a gnawing conscience, and foreboding tremblings. It gave being to tears, and sighs, and groans, and pains, and anguish, and all the tribes of misery. Death, and the curse, and hell blackened in its rear.

Believer, never contemplate this ruin without adoring God for its far more exceeding reparation. Sin came. Jesus follows to take it all away. Life died within man's soul.

Jesus appears a quickening Spirit, and now your life is hidden with Christ in God. The torch of creature-righteousness expired. The Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.—Mal. 4:2. Do you bewail the loss? No, rather rejoice for the infinity of gain.

But still it is our wisdom often to mark the story of Eve's fall. The cases differ. But in this mirror we should see ourselves.

Her nature was pure holiness. Each inward impulse was God-ward. To bask in His smile—to joy in His fellowship—to taste His goodness was her full delight. She had no native will to stray. In us the inborn bias is all downward. The tide of inclination rushes strongly towards evil. Our nature has no heart for God.

Her temptation was wholly from without. The devil came. He put forth all his subtlety to beguile. She listened, and she was beguiled. In us there is a brood of hellish desires. The Tempter knocks. They traitorously invite him to come in.

Such is the difference. But still there is sad sameness. The Tempter is the selfsame person. His quiver holds the selfsame shafts. As he assailed Eve, so he assails each one of her descendants. It is therefore the path of safety to study well his arts and ways. Intelligence of an opponent's warfare is a good shield. Forewarning is a bulwark of defense. Observers of a beacon escape the peril. The

mariner, acquainted with the chart, steers from the rocks and shoals.

Eve was vanquished by three crafty thrusts. Three poisoned arrows gave the deadly wounds. The flesh was seduced to lust—the eyes to long—and pride to covet. The forbidden fruit was exhibited first, as good for food—next, as pleasant to the eyes—then, as desirable to make one wise.

Now, just as in the acorn, the monarch of the forest lives; as a small seed contains the planks for mansions, ships, and mighty works—so, in the earliest temptation there lies the embryo of sin's whole progeny. All Satan's efforts, which have been or shall be, are varied aspects of his first art. The plan of all his after-schemes is wrapped in Eden's plot. He always triumphs by the development of a stratagem here shadowed out. As then, so now, his victims fall through the flesh, the eye, or pride.

1. The FLESH is mighty to corrupt the inner man. Its doors are countless. Its casements are seldom closed. Through these there is quick access to the heart. It also is our encompassing mantle. We cannot escape its close embrace. We never move but in its company. There is no time, when it is absent. Hence its prodigious power.

Eve shows how easily it yields. In the happy garden there was all abundance to gratify the palate. Countless trees presented all deliciousness. A rich banquet of delights was spread. One only fruit was banned. Eve was slyly led to

gaze upon it. Then carnal longings arose. In appearance it was "good for food." The appetite desired. She extended her hand. She touched. She plucked. She tasted. She ate. God had forbidden—but the flesh broke down the barrier. The peril of transgression was terrific; but fear vanished before this craving. The lust burst all restraints. The devil moved the flesh, and so enchained his captive.

He thus discovered the weakness of the fleshy tenement. He saw an opening so ready to admit his wily steps. He found a latchet yielding to his touch. Thus experienced, he has ever wrought soul-havoc through the flesh. Whoever lived too high—too low—for these sad baits! Consult the annals of the world. In almost every page foul falls proclaim the deathful work of sensual allurements. On all sides there are plains strewn with the slain. If we ask, "Who slew all these?" the reply is at hand. The devil spread some carnal indulgence. The fruit seemed good to give a momentary delight. The victims took the cup, and drank the draught of death.

When years of conquest had rolled on, plumed with large triumphs, he meets the God-man, Jesus. Here was the first in human nature, unsoiled by his touch. Amazed—perplexed—but hopeful still, he gathers all his might for a vast effort. He finds the object of his hate weak through long fasting—alone—disconsolate—in cheerless gloom. The opportunity is most favorable. All things around concur to promise victory. He takes the shaft, by which Eve, innocent, and full of every enjoyment, fell. Surely Jesus, worn out—weary—sad—will not withstand. The

enticing suggestion is whispered, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Matt. 4:3. The flesh craves—to satisfy it how easy!—One word brings full supply—food comes at your bidding, and fainting nature will revive. The arrow wings its harmless way. Jesus opposes the sword of the Spirit. "It is written," shatters the attack.

There is then no *necessity* in flesh to yield. Proneness to totter is not inability to stand. Slippery ground cannot compel a fall. There is one, whom the lust of the flesh could not seduce.

Believer, adore this vanquisher of that foul destroyer. Clinging to His side, take courage. This lust is not insuperable. He can enable you by His grace. He can put within you the power of His Spirit. He can bear you in His arms, above each snare. Be not dismayed by fast-falling showers of vile suggestions. Doubtless he, who subdued Eve, hopes to subdue you. He, who dared to solicit Jesus, fears not to tempt you. But the temptation is not sin—the whizzing of the arrow is not a wound. A conqueror is ready to make you more than conqueror.

But you must be skilled to use the sword, so mighty in the hands of Jesus. By the breath of His omnipotence He could have swept the Tempter to perdition. But He resists as man, with a weapon always within each man's reach. Learn well, then, the contents of your Bible. Apply them well, and then the foe will quickly fly.

But perhaps *accusing memory* tells of many falls. The flesh has often sold you unto sin. You tremblingly inquire, 'Can these deep wounds be healed? Can pardon pass by such offences?' Jesus again presents Himself. He is the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Here is the only cure. But it is all-sufficient. *Pile all the sins, which flesh has ever sinned, they vanish in this stream!* Wash and be whiter than the whitest snow.

2. The EYE is also an inlet of solicitations. Eve warns again. She fixed her eyes upon the fruit, and soon its beauty put forth fearful fascination. The attraction strengthened. Resistance melted, as snow before the sun. The enchanting appearance bewitched. The outward show injected sparks of longing. The fire kindled. The bait was taken. The eye betrayed. Sinlessness perished.

The devil thus found another crevice in our battlements and cruelly he has used the entrance. He discovered his advantages through the eye. And no opportunity has he ever lost.

From that day he has been diligent to exhibit fascinating scenes, to gild externals with bewitching beauty, and to lead through them into sin's vilest paths.

The baits of this class are indeed countless. The catalogue contains each object of our sight. Here shine the pomp and splendor and parade of life—the gold—the silver—the sparkling jewel, and the brilliant gem. Here glitter all the decorations of elaborate skill—all the possessions, which

money can procure—all costly foods—luscious feasts—splendid banquets, and intoxicating bowls. Here dazzle the showy equipage, and the gay attire. But while the roll is too vast to unfold, Satan knows all, and knows well how to use. He fans the desire to possess. He silences the timid scruple, and lulls the warning conscience. He suggests many means to snatch the dazzling prize. None of our race escape this trial. The monarch and the noble covet more exalted splendor. The poor man in his lowly hut looks enviously on some better lot. To every eye something pleasant is attractively presented. And then the seed of craving ripens into crime. Quickly the hand seizes what the eye loves. Where is the child of man uninjured through this organ! It seldom opens, but temptations press through to our hurt.

Behold again the second Adam. The devil, failing to allure the flesh turns to the eye. He "takes him up into an exceeding high mountain and *shows* him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Matt. 4:8. What mind can picture such a scene! In panoramic circle all beauties and splendors pass in review. All in earth, brilliant to attract, strong to allure, glitter in loveliest garb. All magnificence is expanded, as in a map, lit up in the sweetest charms. All attractions are accumulated in one mass. If the eye of Jesus can lust, the flame will kindle now. When the whole lies at his feet, the Tempter thus solicits. "All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Matt. 4:9. A little act of fleeting homage makes you full possessor of this treasury of delights. The dreadful blasphemy recoils. Jesus again

displays the sword of the Spirit. Again the Word of God prevails. The devil shrinks back startled—affrighted—foiled—baffled—defeated.

Believer, rejoice, again I say, rejoice, in your all-conquering Lord. Grasp Him tightly with the hand of faith. Then you rise above your foe. Then the lust of the eyes will cease to lust. Indeed His glories will so eclipse all other view, that earth's best beauty will appear a blank.

But you have often yielded. Like Achan, you have touched the accursed spoils. Desire has entered through the lattice of your eye. It has found lodgment in your heart, and slimed the inner man. You are defiled. How can peace be regained? Rejoice again. For every sinner's every need there is a full supply in Jesus. He has a remedy for every wound. There is balm in our Gilead. There is a physician there. His blood sprinkled on the conscience calms all aching. Plead it in faith, and all the sinful offspring of eye-lust lose their condemning power.

3. There is another broad road open for temptation's feet. It is the desire to be great—the ambition to be distinguished—the lust of admiration. The Spirit names it, "The pride of life." 1 John 2:16. This net too was first spread in Eden. The devil showed the fruit—and whispered, that the taste would enlarge the faculties—give nobler wings to intellect—communicate new stores of knowledge. While she beheld, the poisonous thought took root, the tree is "to be desired to make one wise."

But was not her intelligence enough? She knew God. In that knowledge is the joy of joys, and life for evermore. Can more be gained?—But she heard of enlightened eyes—of being "as gods"—of growth in mental power. Ambition kindled. She coveted the deceptive boon. She lusted and plucked. What is her new discovery! *She went down into the school of evil to learn experimental lessons of disgrace and shame.* From being tempted she became a tempter. She found that she was naked and was afraid. Such is the wisdom which disobedience earns.

Satan triumphs—and the triumph teaches him again, where the heart's citadel is very weak. He clearly sees what an ally he has in the PRIDE of life. Through all time he has used this power—alas! with what success! Eternity will terribly exhibit the millions upon millions slain through this lust.

This net is very wide. Its meshes are the countless modes by which conceit is gratified and vanity excited. Ah! how he casts it now! How he flatters reason! How he persuades the puny intellect that it can soar above our Bible-heights! How he encourages our childish fancies to sit in judgment on the truths of God! His honeyed bait now is, Be wise—be wiser yet—break from the trammels of poor Scripture-thoughts. Mount into brighter light. Leave to superstition's babes the teaching of that antiquated Book. Cast away the twilight candle of by-gone times. Kindle your torch at reason's sun. He shows a tree laden with poisonous berries, and whispers, that it is desirable "to make one wise." His

silly victims eat—and deeper darkness fits them for the blackness of perdition's cells.

It cannot be, that holding such a weapon, he will fail to use it against Jesus. The flesh refused lust—the eye was blind to godless desires—will not the pride of life beguile? This only hope remains. The trial shall be made. Out of the multitudinous temptations thronging this class, *vain-glory* is selected. Jesus is borne to the pinnacle of the Temple. The thought is presented, what admiration will applaud, if you descend, as on expanded wings, unhurt! Fruitless also is this last attempt. The second Adam again wields the sword of the Spirit. Again the Tempter quails. One in human form mightily escapes—gloriously subdues.

Thus in *Eden* we see the devil's triple art and full success—and in the *wilderness* his full defeat. In the one we learn his master-wiles—how strong! almost invincible! In the other we behold them as flimsy threads and crumbling reeds.

Believer, shaped in iniquity, conceived in sin, you have daily cause to mourn Eve's fall. One with Jesus, you have more cause to glory in His victory. Let then your life be lively praise. Realize your gospel-state. As *child of corruption* you always totter on temptation's ground. As *child of God* in Christ your feet are on a rock of triumphs. The threefold implements of hell will surely all assail you. But Jesus leads you to a conqueror's crown. He gives you the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. In Him boldly go forward. In Him you

shall beat back the lust of the flesh—the lust of the eyes—
and the pride of life. And yet a little while, reigning on the
heights of glory, you shall see the legions of evil cast into
their own pit.

CAIN

"Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."
Genesis 4:8

When evil fills the heart, evil *effects* will soon appear. From tainted sources tainted waters flow. The bramble must be clothed with thorns. The tree proclaims the qualities of its root. When poison permeates the veins, the whole frame sickens. The plague begun spreads an infecting course.

When Adam fell, the inner man became entirely corrupt. Now, corruption cannot but propagate corruption. The parent reproduces his own likeness. Hence every child is born in sin. No cradle holds an innocent one. Each offspring of the human family steps upon earth dead towards God—corrupt in inward bias—prone to iniquity. He brings no eye to see God's will—no ear to hear His voice—no feet to climb the heavenly hill. He is an alien from righteousness—a willing slave of Satan—blinded in intellect—a pilgrim towards a lost land—a vessel fitted for destruction—a current strongly rushing downwards. His heart has many tenants; but God is no longer there. The palace once so fair is now overrun with weeds. Like

Babylon in ruins, wild beasts of the desert lie there, and the houses are full of doleful creatures—Isaiah 13:21.

Reader! such surely is your birth-state. Has your soul realized the dreadful truth? Do you abhor natural self? Has the life-giving Spirit quickened you with renovating might? Are you a new creation in Christ Jesus? If so, while in these pages you contemplate Cain, surely you will bless the rescuing grace. If otherwise, may his dark picture scare you from delusion's dream! Would you be saved! You must be born again. Would you see heaven? You must be translated into the second Adam's kingdom.

Let now man's first-born be surveyed. Ponder his course. His deeds will show the disposition of his mind. The story will endorse this view of human fall, and prove that no abyss can be more deep. The early annals of the world feed not mere curiosity. Superfluous statement finds no place. Thus as to the first family we briefly read, that it commenced in Cain and was increased by Abel. The birth of the elder seemingly was hailed with rapturous delight. The mother in her joy exclaimed, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Genesis 4:1. The younger received the name of *Abel*, which means *vanity*. Is not this token, that he was comparatively disesteemed? If so, the lesson meets us, how man miscalculates and human expectations err. Blessings reflect a sovereign will. True good descends in channels long since marked by wise decrees. The arrangements of heaven are deeper than earth's hopes or wishes. Not man's desire, but God's own purpose, rules events.

Of the childhood of these brothers we have no mention—a veil conceals their early training. The history only states, that their professions were the peaceful work of pastoral life. They lived in nature's field. They labored under heaven's own canopy. Abel kept sheep. Cain tilled the ground. One watched the flock. The other sowed the seed and reaped the grain.

But surely it is not a vain surmise, that alike they shared the same instructions from their parents' lips. Thought may go back and listen to the converse of the primal household. Doubtless these sons would often be riveted by rapturous recitals of the garden-home—the lovely beauty of each scene—the blessedness of God at all times near—heard in each sound—seen in each object—adored in every movement of the mind. Would they not hear, also, of the tempter's sly approach—his daring lie—the ear too easily beguiled—the lingering look—the rising doubt—the new-born lust—the fatal touch—the dreadful taste—the instant midnight of the soul—the wreck of godliness and peace—the downcast shame—the trembling fear—the inward horror—and all the terrible realities of a sinful state?

Would they not then be told, how *grace* illumined this dismal gloom—how mercy winged her way to promise recovery—and the woman's seed—and coming redemption—and purposed salvation—and One, whose death would utterly annihilate the devil's triumph, and whose life would bring in everlasting righteousness? Next they would see the right of *sacrifice*. Every bleeding

victim would proclaim sin's dreadful penalty. This ordinance would portray atonement through another's blood. The skins, also, of these slaughtered beasts, supplying clothing for the body, would fitly show the obedience of the dying Savior as the soul's justifying robe.

These lessons are the full Gospel in microscopic form. All saving truth is here embodied. And who can doubt, that Cain and Abel were thus taught alike the outlines of salvation's scheme? They had their Bible in their parents' teaching. Human malady and heavenly cure—the peril and the refuge—the ruin and the rescue—their state, as Adam's sons—their hope through grace would be their earliest instruction.

Is the effect the same? Are their minds brought to the like holy faith? Far otherwise. The sun, which melts the snow, hardens the clay. While outward lessons are the same to both, only one heart is savingly impressed—the other becomes harder. Great difference would hence pervade their total character. But it comes most vividly to view in their approach to God.

Behold the worshipers. First mark Cain. He feels that homage is the great Creator's due. Therefore he makes an offering. But he consults with 'blinded human reason'. He listens to his wayward will, and so infers, that the produce of *his own toil* is sacrifice most fit. He brings "of the fruit of the ground." In this at once the working of self-righteous pride appears. He worships as a vain free-thinker. Here is no confession of his guilty need. Here is

no faith in the revealed atonement. Here is no acceptance of the way of grace. Here is no delight in reconciling blood. God's mode of access is rejected. Self-will rebelliously concludes, "I stand bold in uprightness—free to commune with God! Why should I humbly plead another's death? Why should I trust another's power to save? I pay the fruit of my own labor. Sufficient is this obligation to my Maker. This only I present." Such is the constant voice of nature. Such is the vanity of unregenerate man. Inflated by high thoughts of SELF, he tramples GRACE beneath contemning feet.

Now turn to Abel. He likewise comes to worship. But the contrast is great, as light from darkness. The firstlings of his flock are in his hand. He raises an altar. Thereon he lays a dying victim. The Spirit testifies of the principle, which moves this act. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Heb. 11:4. Expand this conduct. It sweetly shows soulhumbleness—consciousness of nature's ruin—confession of extremest need—acknowledgment of life's forfeiture—reliance only on the atoning Lamb. A voice from Abel's altar cries, "My eyes are to the coming Savior. I rejoice in Him, as all my hope—desire—pardon—life."

Reader! you see the amazing difference. How is it so? The answer is near and sure. Grace visited one—the other was passed by. To Cain all pious precepts were as water cast upon a rock. To Abel they came as good seed falling on good ground. It was so because some *mighty power* touched the younger— while the elder remained in

nature's hardness—ignorance—conceit. This power was heavenly and from heaven.

Thus Adam's children show that grace alone can convert a soul. Parents—guardians—teachers—pastors—friends must use each effort and must strain each nerve. But vain is every zealous toil, except the Spirit fly to help. Without light from the Holy Spirit, sin never can be felt and Jesus never can be seen—sought—loved. Souls quickened from on high, and they alone, hasten to salvation's ark.

You, who, Abel-like, present a stricken Savior in your arms, be conscious, that you are *monuments of mercy*—own your vast debt—give thanks—adore. "By *grace* are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves—it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. You are followers of "righteous Abel." "Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." Isa. 54:17. Can faith thus worship and receive no smile? This story replies, that heaven rejoices, when gracious souls plead dying merit. God looks with favor upon Abel and testifies approval. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Believer, take all the joy of this grand truth. If you glory in the cross, if your whole trust is in the God-man's work, your prayers are heard—your worship gladdens the bright courts above—God hearkens to your imploring soul, and tokens will descend to prove acceptance. It was so to Abel. It is so now. All who walk in the same faith find like approval.

How different is the case of unbelief! Formalists may present long trains of man-made observances. The service is self-will, not faith. It is a skeleton with no warm breath. It is but 'splendid sin'. There is no note to reach the ears of God. It is abomination in His sight. "Unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect."

Cain quickly felt, that Abel basked beneath approving smiles, while darkness was his doom. Abel's happiness, reflecting heavenly rays, pierces him to the quick. The scum of his iniquities soon rises to the surface. The fiend's internal broodings rush into action. "He was very angry, and his countenance fell." Envy—malice—rage fret as a swelling tide. They sweep all barriers away. God in forbearance checks and remonstrates. But divine patience only irritates him more. Sinful passion takes the helm. The presence of his righteous brother becomes a maddening goad. Earth is misery to him, while Abel treads it. Thus a murderous thought enters his breast—a murderous scheme is formed. For a while pretense hides it. The usual communion is maintained; and as in other days, they walk together to the fields.

But now what scene occurs! Surely the very earth will quake—the universe will groan—each leaf will hang its head in sorrow, and the sun hide its startled rays. Cain looks upon his mother's son. But no softenings stir. No pity spares.

His arm is raised. The blow is aimed. The wound is given. Abel falls a murdered corpse. There is nothing too vicious

for sin to do. There are no depths of crime, from which it shrinks. It trembles not to break a parent's heart, or take a brother's life. It scoffs at fear of man. It braves the vengeance of the Lord. If its impious hands could scale the heaven of heavens, it would do violence to all within those blest abodes. All this is sounded in those fearful words, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him."

The annals of ensuing crime show not iniquity more vile. There have been dreadful deeds, enough to startle hell, but where a deed like this! Thus Adam's firstborn exhibits evil in its largest stature. Let us not dream, that sin came upon earth a little seed, and rose by gradual growth into its full enormities. Here it stands at once gigantic in every proportion. It needs not a long course of time to ripen or mature it. Behold again that bleeding one. It is the "righteous Abel." The first who lived by faith first dies a martyr's death.

Let then none fondly dream, that piety wins love, or faith conciliates the world's favor. If now there be no open outrage, it is because restraint confine the arm. Earth would be drunk with gore, if hatred to Christ could work its will. Brother, also, is slain by brother. Earth's closest bonds are weak to hold back unbelieving enmity.

Behold once more. The deed is done. Blood stains Cain's hands. Ocean, now, with all its waves, cannot wash out that die. Rolling ages cannot sweep it away. Agonies of remorse cannot recall it. No angel's efforts can remove the weight of guilt. The sin is sinned. Account must now be

given. The murderer hears the searching question—for God will speak—"Where is Abel, your brother?" "What have you done?" But the hardened heart breaks not. The sullen lips pour forth no cry for pardon. No contrition asks for mercy. He stands an icy pillar of despair. Hope tenders no support. No prospect brings a ray to cheer. He knows not how to bear his being. But forth he must go to reap the harvest sown by sin.

Here the curtain falls. But Cain still lives, and must forever live. But where? What is his present state? What will be his everlasting doom? He was of the "wicked one," and with the wicked one must pass to his own place. The race of Cain, also, still pollutes our earth. It is a faithful admonition—"Woe unto them, they have gone in the way of Cain." Jude 11. That way is still a common by-path. The sons of nature crowd it. Grace only can call from it.

In this history some of its downward stages are depicted. Pride takes the first step. The sinner, satisfied with self, sneers at the thought of being fallen—vile—lost. His blinded solace is, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Rev. 3:17. Self-righteous, he perceives no beauty in the glorious cross. Unconscious of filth, he seeks no cleansing. Ignorant of guilt, he laughs at pardon. Christ is despised. The Gospel is rejected, as an old wives' tale. No grace bars the heart's door. Therefore the whole legion of hell's passions find admission. They enter and fix their foul abode. Outward warnings are not heard. Frightful lusts are wantonly indulged. A mad career is madly run. Human laws may check overt acts. Cain's

enormity may not in very deed be perpetrated—but Cain's depravity dwells within. Then comes the end, which has no end—no peace to soothe a dying bed—the dread account before the great white throne—the sure rejection—the dreadful "Depart from Me"—and lastly, the never-ending prison of anguish and despair.

Reader! let not Cain thus warn in vain. May good to you spring from this dreadful life! Let his example search your inmost soul. Is there one particle of self-justifying pride within? If so, spare it not. Drag it to the cross and slay it there. Open your eyes to solemn truth. In you, that is in your flesh, there dwells no good thing—Rom. 7:18. Your best deserves hell's depths. There is no moment of your life unstained by sin. No thought of your mind could reach the Law's high standard. Away then with all self-confidence. You have no penitence—no tears—no prayers—no services, which need not Christ's atoning blood. Flee then from self to Christ. No pardon—cleansing—righteousness are found apart from Him. Listen to Cain's wail—escape the wrath to come. Rush not to a place of torment. You yet live. Christ is near with open arms. Hasten as the neediest of sinners to Him the sinners' friend. You will find Him willing—able to give uttermost salvation. None perish with their face towards Jesus.

"Spirit of the living God! You who visited Abel, in mercy visit all who read these pages! Call many from Cain's graceless course to Abel's faith and heaven's eternal glory!"

LAMECH

One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, "Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me. If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!"

Genesis 4:23-24

Here a mysterious personage appears. Dark veils envelop him. He moves with shrouded features rapidly across the sacred page. His few words startle rather than inform. While the eye watches him, he vanishes. Before the ear can fully catch his voice, silence stills the scene.

But still he occupies a place on hallowed ground. He is a Bible-character. The Spirit forbids him to be buried in oblivion, and gives him a station in the ever-living word. Thus he stands, as a warning Beacon. Each pupil in the school of truth is bid to learn from Lamech.

Let us then now draw near with prayerful hearts. "Holy Spirit! this is Your record. Pour down explanatory rays. Shine on this dial, which Your wisdom raises. Bring light out of this obscurity. Unfold your gracious purpose. Give

the right key, that the casket may fly open. May every reader be wiser by the survey of these dread features!"

But let idle curiosity retire. Marvels, indeed, are here, but no details. No lengthened statements gratify a prying mind. No ingenuity can expand the brevity. No research can gain more than the words—*One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, "Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me. If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!"*

But the brief words are very sad. They plant us in a region enlivened by no sun—in a field without one flower—in a parched desert with no cooling stream—in a deep valley of dreadful shadows. Each sound falls mournfully as the knell of death. The key note of this dirge is sin. Vice bubbles up as from a fountain of iniquity. The whole scene appalls. There is not one bright spot. Hope cannot hope, where all is hopeless. Pity may pity, but with much trembling. None can leave Lamech and not sigh.

The wretched speaker is of the family of Cain. *Lamech* is a vile descendant of a vile progenitor. When five generations had passed away, in him Cain seems to reappear. It may be well to approach him by marking the complexion of his TIMES. They show *the piteous state of men devoid of grace*—in whom self is the worshiped idol, and selfishness the master-passion.

The house of Cain grew rapidly. They sparkled in nature's lively gifts. Their energy was great. Their intellect was keen. Their contrivances were shrewd. But we look in vain for love of God, or labors in His service. They planned and toiled indeed. But it was all for temporal aggrandizement—for worldly interest—for comforts, for pleasures. Extensive buildings spread. Inventions in the use of metals advanced. Distinction in melodious arts was reached. Cities arose. Works in brass and iron acquired fame. The harp and organ sounded in their feasts. They became a multitude great in earth's greatness—rich in earth's wealth—skillful in earth's skill—polished in earth's polish—luxurious in earth's luxuries. They were many, and they were not crude. They ascended high steps of cultivation. But all their industry was the intensity of worldly-mindedness. God was not the moving principle. They were emphatically "of the world." This was their character, "he that is of the earth is earthly." John 3:31.

Can we advance without a sigh! how pitifully foolish are the votaries of the world! They may have gifts, which glitter splendidly—but it is only for a speck of time. Their brightest sun soon sets in blackest night. Their joys are no true joys. Their continuance is a fleeting dream. Their flowers have many a thorn, and in the plucking fade. Their fruitless blossoms soon decay.

Children of men, give ear. Why is life yours? Why are you called to tread this earth? Why are immortal spirits planted in your breasts? Why do grand faculties raise you as creation's lords? It has been nobly said, "Man's chief end is

to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Shall then all your time, and means, and powers, and energies be frittered in the sordid work of serving time and gratifying self? Awake, arise, renounce such folly. Grovel not in such mire! Study the glorious truths of God's most glorious word. Be one with Christ. Live as citizens of the bright world. Walk with God. Join the high company of His sons. Shine as lights below. Work for eternity. In every employ seek first the heavenly kingdom—the good of men—the glory of the Lord. Take as your chart the faithful saying—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15.

When we contemplate man's most brilliant and successful efforts—the books, in which high genius shines—the stately edifices—the almost living statue—the speaking picture—and other monuments of splendid minds; admiration is turned to mourning by the reflection, 'Was this designed to magnify the Lord?' "Whose is this image and superscription?" It avails nothing to have loud praise, where we are not, if we have torment where we are. Many who are crowned as great and glorious here, may awake to "shame and everlasting contempt." Dan. 12:2. The old world, with all its ingenuities, ripened for ruin. "And they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away." Matthew 24:39

Such were the *times* of Lamech. Now hear his VOICE. He speaks unto his "wives." But why are there two? Is God's ordinance thus wide? Is double matrimony permitted by

the sacred rite? Far otherwise. Consider its intent. God in His tender mercy plans sweetest solace. Therefore He places one of man's nature by his side—to be a second self—a sharer of happiness—a partner of distress—another heart, to which each care may be unbosomed—whose love may make life's journey smooth—whose sympathy may render burdens light—who may diminish loads, and double joys—who may meet tear with tear and smile with smile—who may be intertwined in every fellowship, until death break the bond. Intent and gracious thus to multiply delights, God brought to man "an help-meet for him"—or, as the original declares, "an help as before him"—always near to minister and aid. Genesis 2:18.

Thus the design excludes plurality—and therefore the ordinance grants but one wife. God gives not Eves, but Eve.

Jesus adds His authoritative comment. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one." Matthew 19:5-6. No sentence can be more explicit. Two—not many—shall be one. Adherence shall be to the wife, not wives. But the design is frustrated, when husband joins himself to more than one. Oneness is then broken into diverse parts. Affections which should have one channel, diverge into distracting streams. Marriage is no more godly union but confusion. It is not love, but jealousy. The sweetest type of Christ and His one spouse, the Church, is debased into dissoluteness.

Lamech disregards God's will. His reckless passions burst the wise restraint. Greedily he wallows in licentiousness—and by his lusts degrades the hallowed oneness into community of beasts. Thus he scorns the primal law. It is not said, that he was the first to perpetrate this sin. But the first record of it claims his name. No polygamist in history precedes him. In sacred annals he stands at the head of a new crime.

But did it end in him? Evil, once introduced, spreads as a flame amid dry stubble. The weed, once rooted, can hardly be eradicated. Through latest ages the fruit may still spring up. Hence this *domestic misery* pollutes not only wilds of savage life, but families of grace. Even David strayed in this miry path. Reader! in pity of others, if not of self, mortify each rising sin. By yielding you may found a mountain of misery—and earn the ignoble fame of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Future generations may trace their wretchedness to your example. Many may wish, that you had never lived. Lost souls may loathe you as paving their road of ruin.

Lamech sinks into blacker guilt. He next appears confessedly a murderer. He openly proclaims, "I have slain a man." True it may be, that no immediate link joins his offences. But true it is, that sin is always a spreading plague. One fault indulged soon swells into a deepening torrent, and widens into a boundless sea. One little leak may sink the noblest ship. One little spark may carry fiery fury to immense expanse. Sin's property is to blind and

harden. It soon obscures the light, and then hideousness affrights not, and a monster seems not monstrous. Its contact blunts the edge of conscience; and he, who previously said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" now quickly perpetrates the very deed and blushes not.

See this in Lamech. He tramples down the marriage-law. Then human blood pollutes his hands. He goes literally in the very "way of Cain." Let it be granted, that no perceptible attraction unites these branches of transgression. But let it be maintained, that sin will not live single. It quickly propagates, and fearfully extends.

Of the provoking cause, and of the sad details, history speaks not. Until the great day shall reveal all secret things, we can only know that he slew a man. Until all deeds are published to an assembled world, the bare fact only can be seen, that, like Cain, he was a murderer.

Reader! perhaps horror thrills through your heart at this terrific sound. You sigh, "How could this be! Where was his conscience! Was human feeling utterly extinct! How could the thought arise! How could it be cherished! How could the hand be raised! How could the victim be looked on and not spared!"

It is well to shudder at such sinfulness of sin. But in your great loathing turn your eye inward. Mark what passions lurk in your own breast. See what monsters nestle in the chambers of your imagination. There are dormant vipers

there. Temptation and opportunity would quicken them into activity. Your heart holds seeds of all iniquity. True, you turn pale at thought of murder. Once David felt the like abhorrence. True, the ripe crime pollutes you not. But what is the ember, from which this flame bursts forth? Is it not anger? Our Lord's illustrious teaching traces these floods of evil to their secret source. Anger conceived, retained, fostered, fanned, soon becomes rage. Rage flares into fury. Fury maddens into recklessness. Recklessness is blind to consequence. Thus, then, you may possess the moving cause, without advancing to the terrific deed. God's eye may see all full-blown evil in your embryo-thoughts. Therefore in all hatred of another's crime, the gracious man will hate himself the most. He will confess that nature always tends to sin. He will ascribe his guiltless walk to screening grace and to his guardian God. Lamech cries, Kill every sinful motion when it first stirs. It will soon lead to nether-millstone hardness. It may provoke the hopeless doom, "Let him alone." It may bring down the bitterest curse of a "reprobate mind."

He seems to have rolled quickly down into this slough. He speaks of this murder—but with no distress, or pain, or penitence, or shame. Unblushingly he trumpets forth his deed. Unfeelingly he shows his blood-stained hands, as if they were some trophy of illustrious deed.

Ah! when conscience is thus seared, where is the fiend more vile than man! Earth still may be his home, but hell is within! Lamech is a proof. His heart next shows abandoned desperation. He abuses God's long-suffering.

He takes it as a weapon to fight the more against Him. Because God is patient, he becomes more sinful. Divine goodness, as the sun shining on a putrid mass, draws out its vileness. Cain for a while had found a respite. He was not cast down instantly into the pit. Avenging lightnings drove him not headlong to his bed of fire. Life was prolonged. No, an especial shield was for a season spread around. This patience on the part of God foments the basest thoughts in Lamech. He pleads this case. His distorting mind concludes that he was less in crime than his progenitor. He dreams the beguiling dream—if Cain were spared, surely I shall be so much more—if he received protection, surely greater impunity is my due. "If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold surely Lamech seventy and seven-fold."

All this is very black. This conduct touches the last confines of wickedness. How different are hearts broken by the Spirit! Grace always hangs a lowly head, and wails in dust and ashes, and sees the inward blackness, and in its holiest actings still laments, "Sinners! of whom I am chief."

But it is nature's base propensity to view self in a blinding mirror. Keen to see others' fault, it has no eye for home iniquities. Sightless as to self, it misreads, also, the mind of God. From the sweet flower of God's forbearance, it extracts the direst poison. God spares in mercy. This tender goodness is abused, as if He neither saw nor cared. The wrath withheld is counted as indifference. The hand, which smites not, is despised as powerless. *Reprieve* is

construed to be *acquittal*. Execution delayed is presumed on as impunity. Patience, the gentle guide to penitence, misleads to hard indifference. The lengthened space is filled not with amendments, but more vile transgressions. Reluctance to take vengeance is insulted, as license to prolong iniquity. The Spirit's warning is verified, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccles. 8:11.

Thus Lamech heaped up wrath against the day of wrath. Thus, also, the men of his dark days sinned with presumptuous hand. Eliphaz depicts their conduct and their end—Yet you say, 'What does God know?

Does he judge through such darkness? Thick clouds veil him, so he does not see us as he goes about in the vaulted heavens.' Will you keep to the old path that evil men have trod? They were carried off before their time, their foundations washed away by a flood. They said to God, 'Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do to us?' Job 22:13-17

Reader! where is baseness like the baseness of thus *trampling on mercy*? Its language is, 'Because God is good, I will be viler yet—because He grants me longer space, I will the more defy Him.' Where is folly like unto this folly? It misinterprets God's loveliest attribute. It draws aggravated guilt out of these wells of grace. Where is madness like unto this madness? It rushes on the thick

bosses of Almighty wrath. It adds fury to the penal flames.
It sharpens

the gnawing of the deathless worm. For though avenging
feet may tardily advance, avenging hands will strike at last
more heavily.

O you despisers! tremble and turn. Fall low on knees of
penitence. Marvel that you yet live. Bless God, that yet
you may repent and pray. Give thanks, that Christ yet
offers pardon. But delay not another moment. Remember
Lamech, and perish not.

ENOCH UNHEEDED

"Enoch walked with God."
Genesis 5:22

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men—"See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 1:14-15

While Lamech sinned foully in the house of Cain, Enoch shone brightly in the family of Seth. In the worst times some godliness will raise its head. A star often glitters in the darkest night. In a waste wilderness some solitary flowers bloom. A green spot sparkles amid expanse of sands. When sin rushes in like a flood, a barrier from the Spirit meets it. When the Lord's cause lies very low, some saint confesses God—some faithful hand points up to heaven—some noble champion draws the sword of truth—some preacher of righteousness uplifts the Gospel-banner. While the Head breathes, the members do not wholly die. Satan never reigns undisputedly. There was an Enoch in the midnight of the old world.

His miniature is exceedingly lovely. It shows much beauty in a little space. One touch displays the man—"he walked with God." But in that simple phrase we read the pure consistency of his happy life. His career was the brightness of a tropic climate—the clear blue of a summer sky—the tranquil flow of an unruffled stream.

Blessed man! he took no step, but leaning on his God—he did no deed, but as in God's sight—he spoke no word, but as to God's listening ear. God was his light within—his life without—the polar star of all his being. He knew no deviating path—no double motive—no divided heart. His way was narrow, but it led straightforward. He saw his guide, and followed fully.

Thus he lived a type of what the Spirit can effect. What man, through heavenly grace, has been; man, through like grace, may still become. The height attained before the flood, is not too high for other days. Away then with the thought, that evenness of godly walk is too sublime for present earth! It is indeed a fearful truth, that the wells of birth-corruption are most deep—that evil cleaves as the very skin—that Satan ever tempts—that the world spreads most fascinating snares—that man unaided surely sinks. But the Spirit lives, and loves, and is omnipotent. He can subdue iniquities, and blunt temptation's shafts, and win the heart to Christ, and fill it with all the fullness of God. Thus the saint, linked to sinful flesh, can still walk closely with his God. Enochs may still bless the earth.

Child of God, do you lament your distance from this state? Be humbled, for you are not what you might be. Investigate the cause. Too often prayer is lifeless—infrequent—vague—pointless—the eye of faith is slumbering, or not intent on Christ—the heart ceases to watch—the shield is dropped—the sword is sheathed—the Spirit is grieved—the Word is not the constant food—ordinances are negligently used—the wings of wandering thoughts are not clipped; indolence puts out the fire of zeal. The walk with God is far from self—from sin—from worldly cares—from formal worship, and from frivolity's enfeebling whirl. It seeks heaven with heavenward face, besieging it with unremitting cries. It works for God—faithful to His truth—strong in His strength—rejoicing in His presence—valiant for His glory. "Enoch walked with God."

It may be said, that he was thus a magnet to attract, and not a Beacon to deter. His life, indeed, allured to holy paths. The halo around him was the winning beauty of devotedness. But while he meekly lived, he boldly preached. His steps were gentle, but his words were the thunder's roar. Among the sinners of the old world his voice was trumpet-clearness. The Spirit records his key-note. He spoke of the Judgment-seat. He raised on high the great White Throne. He warned of tremendous reckoning. He told of the world ended, and of the endlessness beyond. His spirit bounded to time's final goal. He seems not to have dwelt on Jesus in humiliation, bearing our sins, and making full atonement. He strode over the *first* advent—the glorious ascension to God's right hand—the session on

the mediatorial throne—and all the wonders of Christ's wondrous reign.

He pictured the awe of the *concluding* scene. His Beacon was the coming Judge. Thus he proclaimed, "Behold! the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

We hence learn, that the old world rushed not unwarned to ruin. God left them not without clear notice. They were told of the sure end. They knew how terrible were the wages of iniquity. The upraised arm was shown. The crushing blow was fore-announced. They heard that clouds were gathering, and that shelter should be sought. The cry went forth, Behold the Judge stands before the door.

So it has always been. In every case, God will be justified, when he speaks, and clear, when he judges. Men press to hell, surmounting many barriers. They will not turn even for the prize of heaven. Too late, one agonized confession will ring sadly in each lost cell. "My anguish is *my* merited desert. Many a sign-post told, that my path was towards this misery. I knew of righteous judgment. This end was blazoned on many a warning scroll. The blame is mine, even as is the suffering. I stopped my ears. I steeled my heart. I trampled on restraints. Therefore I am here. Justice is just, and I am righteously undone."

Reader! these thoughts lead directly to Enoch's Beacon. Mark it, and you shall escape this doom. "Holy Spirit! come and give realizing views. All must be darkness, without Your rays. All must be light, if You give Your presence. All will be hardness, except You melt. The rock will soften, if You will mercifully touch."

A prelude sounds, "Behold!" Let every slumberer awake. You listless, listen. Let every eye turn here-ward; for soon each eye must meet the sight. A revelation dawns, dimming all that earth ever saw. Let then all minds now contemplate.

Look onward—realize—"behold." What is the spectacle! Whom do you see! "The Lord comes." The God-man is revealed. Jesus appears unclouded— manifest—in open glory. He, who took flesh, as Bethlehem's babe—He, who grew up at Nazareth—He, who walked a lowly man beside the sea of Galilee— He, who bedewed the garden with His blood of agony—He, who bore the scourge—the buffetings—the mockery—the crown of thorns—He, who died accursed on the accursed tree, and suffered all the penal anguish of our sins— He comes to close the scene of earth, and wrap up the worn-out scroll. "Behold, He comes."

Child of God, "Behold." Gaze steadily. It is your own Jesus. "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as you have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. Recognize your

kinsman— your elder brother—your unfailing friend. It is He, who loved you with an everlasting love—who loved you more than His own life—who espoused you to Himself, in righteousness and truth, forever—who welcomed death, that you might live—who thinks His heavens incomplete without you. By faith you often realize His smile—and see your name upon His heart—and hear the whispers of his love—and lean upon His arm—and joy in His fellowship. Now see Him at hand—in very person—in glorious nearness. Behold, the Judge is your own Jesus!

You Christless ones. "Behold." He, whom you scorned—reviled—rejected— He whose blood you counted as a worthless thing—He, whom you crucified afresh—whose love you ridiculed—whose wrath you braved—whose cause you strove to counteract—whose kingdom you have trampled down—whose scepter you defied—whose humble followers you derided—maligned— oppressed—whose warnings you rejected—whose truth was your jest—whose ministers you shunned—whose word you hated—whose promises and threats you sneered at— "Behold," this Jesus comes!

But who can describe the actual spectacle! Faith, with her eagle eye intently fixed on heaven, strives to conceive what soon will shine forth in reality. But weak is the effort. No painter's skill can represent the blazing flame—the sun in mid-day splendor—the glow of life in human countenance—the expression of the sparkling eye. Paul's eloquence could not relate the words of Paradise— they

were unspeakable. No angel's tongue can open out the riches of Christ—they are unsearchable. So this sight exceeds all skill of utterance. We only know, that "The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." Matt. 25:31. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father." Matt. 16:27.

But here description must be silent. Let the sun intensify its rays into one focus, and magnify ten thousand times its present luster—that brightness would be but an expiring torch—a dying spark—compared to Jesus thus appearing. His human form—for human it will ever be—will be as dazzling as Deity can render it; and every eye shall see it.

The encircling retinue, also, will be worthy of the king of kings, and worthy of the purpose of His advent. "All the holy angels" spread their wings around. Heaven sends forth its total armies. The whole company of the angelic host encircle their descending Lord. They attend in all their glittering multitudes. Thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand swell the train. Think of the beauty of one seraph's form—think of the concentrated beauty of the collected throng—think of the God-man Jesus superlatively shining above all. And still thought touches not the grand reality.

But the glory of this retinue is more glorious yet. Every angel shall be present—so, also, every saint. All who are Christ's, from righteous Abel to the last-born child of faith, shall add their numbers to the swell of triumph. They shall be very many. Jude depicts their hosts as myriads. At

present they may appear a little drop in the vast sea of the ungodly, but when thus gathered into one mass, they will be more than numbers can express.

Believer, mourn not, that now you often seem to stand alone. Truly you are united to a band more than the stars in multitude—more than the sands which gird all oceans.

They shall be very bright. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:4. The corruptible shall have put on incorruption. The mortal shall be robed in immortality. The natural body shall be changed into the lightness, purity, and power of spirit. We now bear the image of the earthly—and it is base, and low, and liable to pains and sad defilements. We shall then bear the image of the heavenly—and it shall be lovely and perfect, as the righteousness of God.

But why are the saints thus gloriously assembled? It is their office now to sit as high assessors in the Judgment. "Do you not know, that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Cor. 6:2. Again, "Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the Saints of the most High—and the time came, that the Saints possessed the kingdom." Dan. 7:22.

Beloved, your earthly lot may be neglect—contempt—reproach, and poverty. You may drink the bitter cup of scorn. It was so with your heavenly Lord. Shall the poor servant covet greater favor? But the end is near. The scene

shall change. Jesus shall re-appear. Then you shall have "beauty for ashes." Then you shall be arrayed in glory by His side. Your place shall be upon His very throne. They, who crushed you, shall see, and tremble, and bewail.

The ensuing scene is vivified by terms familiar to the courts of men. Well-known images thus awfully throw light upon the sequel. It is written "The Judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened." Dan. 7:10. Again, "We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ." Rom. 14:10. Again, "We must all appear," or be made apparent—conspicuous—manifest, "before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. 5:10. Once more, "And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the one who was sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books, according to what they had done." Rev. 20:11-12. Thus graphically is the consummation pictured.

We are thus led in lively thought to intermingle in transactions, which must be. The Spirit takes us by the very hand, and brings us to the dread tribunal. He guides us now to take our station, where we so soon must stand. He almost constrains us to make the future present. Who now can say, that coming judgment is an obscure hint! It is revealed in clearest light. It is proclaimed in strongest

terms. It is displayed in gigantic magnitude. Oh! that the world would learn, that it is sure—near—inevitable; that it will be universal; that it will be final. Each child of man must act his part. All, who are Christ's, shall then receive their crowns. All, who are not found in Him, must meet their condemnation.

But Enoch's teaching omits the full acquittal of the just. Each had indeed his countless and most frightful sins. Each in nature, and by act, had merited the depths of hell. But long ago each had endured his fullest punishment, when the redeeming God-man died. Each too had put on by faith the glories of His glorious righteousness. Each had exhibited by holy walk his vital union with the Lord of life. Each displays full evidence. Each holds the title-deeds to pardon—life—glory. Each has in his heart the fitness for this home. God is faithful. Therefore they are welcomed on the strong ground of right. Jesus purchased heaven, and purchased them, and made them fit. They hear, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25:34. They ascend to thrones of light.

Glory—glory to the God of grace! Glory—glory to the work of Christ!

But Enoch, dealing with sinners, sings not this song of triumph, he shows not the chariots which bear the saints aloft. That he might check and scare from sin's destructive paths, he opens the dreadful side. He drags the ungodly forward. They must confront the great White Throne. The

Judge appears "to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

To Convict. Conscience is now terribly awake. It may have slept amid the warnings and exhortations of time-state. It may have stifled all inward tremors under the Gospel-note. But now it is all life. Its eyes are widely open to the iniquity of lost days—the flimsiness of vain excuse—the positive reality of contracted guilt—the worthlessness of now vanished hopes—the justice of the now-arrived condemnation—the truthfulness of all God's word—the inevitable issue of unpardoned sin.

Earth is now fled away. The guilty have then no terrestrial refuge. Heaven is for the righteous. They have no righteousness. Hell is for the ungodly. They are ungodly. They see it now. They own it. And they must endure. They are convinced, that their whole life was spent in toiling hard to earn the wages of the devil. The time for payment is arrived. His reckoning place is hell. The light of the White Throne makes all things clear. Willful ignorance and self-deception are no longer blind. Memory is awake in agonized review. It sees in one expanding glance the history of all past days. Each action is apparent in true form. Each word again sounds loudly. Each rapid thought swells to the frightful magnitude of overt acts. But each act—each word—each thought is only sin. Denial—extenuation—palliation—have vanished—or, if they show themselves, they aggravate and mock. Truth now reigns.

Confession speaks. Such were our lives. These are our sins. This is our fault. This is our righteous doom. This is our merited misery. The Judge of all the earth does right.

The mandate lingers no more. "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness—there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 22:13. They "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thess. 1:9. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matt. 25:46.

You sons of men, who are not safe in Christ—who have not found the shelter of His saving wings—who have not fled for refuge to His Cross—who are not hid in the clefts of His wounded side—who are not washed in the laver of His blood—who are not covered beneath His sin-concealing righteousness, listen to Enoch's faithful word. You—your works—your speeches—your thoughts are all ungodly. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4:18. These lives of yours will all rise up again in the Judgment-day, and prove your guilt, and call aloud for wrath.

But the final Trumpet sounds not yet. The Throne is not erected yet. The Judge stands indeed before the door, but still His entrance tarries. Judgment is ready, but not yet quite come. The angels spread their wings, but they fly not. You have yet opportunity. Delay affords you space. Oh! then, by all the terrors of that dreadful day—by all the certainties of the foretold assize—by the sure unfolding of

all your most secreted deeds—by the exposure of all that you have done and been—by the inevitable sentence—by the outbreaking wrath—by the down-hurling into hell—by the ever-gnawing chains—by the unquenchable fire—by the everlasting worm—by the eternity of torment, you are now implored to pause—to think—to turn—to weep—to be repentant—to seek mercy—to flee to Christ—to hasten to His Cross—to clasp His arms of love—to take Him as your only hope—to cling to Him as your only refuge—to embrace Him as your full salvation. Make Jesus now your friend. He comes to be your Judge.

UNGODLY ALLIANCE

"The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose."

Genesis 6:2

The Bible is God's Book, therefore it is all divine. Each page gives proof. No human thought could originate such truths. No human mind could so unfold them. Infinite breadths and lengths—eternal depths and heights, are marvelously wrapped up in a few brief words. Enlightened readers see the sure conclusion—this author is more than man.

Take an early illustration. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15.

This sentence—the Gospel of the old world—is brevity comprising boundlessness. It is a narrow field without horizon. Analyze the contents. Two antagonistic powers march forth. Two rival empires are portrayed. All earth's sons, who have been, are, and shall be, appear under opposing banners. Their enmity is ceaseless. One is bruised. The other wins eternal triumphs. Thus one little

map unfolds the total history of Christ and His blessed subjects—of the devil and his cursed slaves. No mortal pen wrote this.

Doubtless the transcendent object of the verse is the God-man Jesus. The prominent spectacle is His deep humiliation—His painful sufferings—His noble achievements—His final trampling on all the powers of darkness. Christ, as the woman's bruised and conquering seed, largely fills the forefront. But as Christ *personal* is here—so, also, is Christ *mystical*. As the term, "your seed," addressed to the old serpent, embraces the whole race of the ungodly—so the term, "her seed," speaking of the woman, is Christ, and all contained in Him—Christ, and all the family of faith. "He is head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." Eph. 1:22, 23. The head is lifeless without its members. Christ is no Christ without His people. Thus this wondrous verse draws a broad line. On the one side, "your seed" appears—on the other, "her seed." No neutral standing is left. Each mother's son is Christ's or Satan's.

This momentous truth pervades the Word. Advance at once to Gospel times. Hear Jesus. "The field is the world—the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." Matt. 13:38. This word is emptiness, except, some have the royalty of Heavenly parentage, while others belong to the apostate spirit's house. John echoes the note. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." 1 John

3:10. The conclusion cannot be eluded—earth is the home of two discordant families.

Sometimes the separate portraits are separately exhibited. The dark compartment is not cloaked. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." John 8:44. They were a reprobate race—and their lives proved their origin. Again, "You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" Matt. 23:33. Here, again, is a vile progeny, and their final home.

The bright contrast also gloriously shines. God is the Father of a kingly race. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32. Jesus is the Father of an ever-living family. His name is "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." Isa. 9:6.

The Spirit is the Father of a spiritual creation. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:6.

Thus Scripture marks out, two widely severed realms. It shows a great gulf fixed, and kingdoms on each side.

Vivid facts endorse these statements. Behold man's first-born. Let Cain and Abel be examined. Naturally they spring from the same stock. In form and lineament they correspond. Their outward frames and mental powers import one origin. They have like features. They tread the

same earth. They breathe the same air. They have like cravings and desires. They are supported by the same food. They sleep the same sleep. They converse in the same language. Great is their outward sameness.

But greater far is their internal difference. In spirit they are as estranged as pole from pole. Cain "was of that wicked one." 1 John 3:12. To Abel the sweet testimony is accorded, "By faith he obtained witness that he was righteous." Heb. 11:4. All who have faith belong to heaven's family. "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:26. Therefore righteous Abel was a son of God.

One received Christ as King—for this is faith's constant act. The other toiled in Satan's prison-house—as all do, who are strangers to this grace. One was light—the other was sightless in a dark world. One was Zion's citizen—the other groveled a worldling among worldlings. One journeyed in the narrow way of life—the other went downwards in destruction's broad road.

This is the truth interwoven in the text before us. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men." Diverse families are here. Some were born again—and thus a new creation made them "sons of God." Others experienced no vital change. They remained corrupt offspring, of corrupt parents—conceived in sin—shaped in iniquity—unclean, because the stream of an unclean fount—dead, because hanging on a withered branch—children of wrath, because their heirdom was the curse.

Such is the mighty difference. What is the power which effects it? It must be external. For all men are equally dead-born. And death can never generate life. The strengthless have no strength. The motionless cannot move. The speechless cannot cry. The skeleton cannot rise. The dry leaf cannot bloom. Ashes cannot brighten into flame. The power, then, is not inborn.

Omnipotence from above achieves the change. The holy Spirit, descending on the wings of love, and moving in the almightiness of His strength, implants new being in the heirs of life. Others, unchanged by heavenly grace, cumber the earth, as moving sepulchers holding dead souls.

Here reason proudly asks—"What is the cause of such distinction? where is the just principle?" Faith with all reverence replies—"The cause is wise, for it is God's wisdom—it is good, for it is God's will—it is righteous, for it is God's resolve—it is holy, for it is God's decree.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25. There is no stern severity—no arbitrary caprice—no sport of chance. "He works all things after the counsel of His own will." Eph. 1:11. True, faith reads not yet the records of the courts above—but it confidently reposes on the word— "What I do, you know not *now*, but you shall know hereafter." John 13:7.

As the tabernacle rose after a pattern marked out in the Mount—so the antitypical Church rises according to an

eternal model. Wisdom and love lay the first stone—wisdom and power frame the materials—wisdom and mercy fit each to its place—wisdom and truth bring forth the topstone—wisdom and grace receive the total glory. "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Rom. 11:33.

The glorious reign of truth will soon break forth. Then the chosen family shall put off disguising flesh, and rightly put on robes of light, and show their crowns of gold. Now they are intermingled with the crowds of earth. They move as others up and down the world. In this field the wheat and the tares grow side by side. In this wilderness the rare flowers are beset with weeds. In these waters, good and bad fishes promiscuously swim. In these pastures, the sheep and goats crop the same herbs. In this great house vessels of gold and wood, of silver and earth, have the like shape. At this banquet guests robed and unrobed sit down. At this mill two grind together, the one to be taken, the other to be left. Thus in time-state the heirs of mercy and of wrath are intermixed. The flesh is their common tabernacle. An atmosphere of contagion envelops both. The spiritual seed must traverse the slippery ground of earth. The tempter marks them well—and hates them most—and never ceases to assail. Traitors, also, in the heart, are active to betray. They are not, as to spirit, of the world. But, as to flesh, they are still in the world. Outward allurements woo them to forbidden paths. The old nature—still alive—looks too complacently on congenial evil. Old passions, pent up, beat rebelliously on the holy

barriers. Thus countless are the occasions of transgression. Multitudinous are the pitfalls in the way.

The history of the old world brings these perils into open light. But it especially shows one sunken rock, the scene of many wrecks. It raises a Beacon on one tremendous precipice. It warns, that MARRIAGE, designed for pure delights, is often perverted to a deathful snare. The record thus speaks. *"The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose."* Such was the ancient mischief. Alas! it has survived the flood. Those waters drowned not the fire of such lust. They quenched not the evil embers of the heart. Proneness to ungodly alliance still exists. Here still a fruitful spring of misery is found.

What inlet induces this temptation? The word replies—the eye. "The sons of God SAW that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." Just so Eve saw the many beauties of the baneful fruit. The fascination enters through the door of sight. The lovely features, the attractive look, the charm of countenance, the grace of symmetry, the beauteous frame decked in the elegance of attire, gradually fix the gaze. This gaze is danger. For the fleshy element ever has leaks—imperiling the bark. It opens many crevices to godless thoughts. It is not yet in heaven. It is not yet angelic. It has not yet escaped the tempter's territory. Child of man, beware. Make a covenant with your eyes.

If the spark of desire once kindles, Satan is quick to fan it into flame. Conscience, at first uneasy, is soon quieted by subtle opiates. Hindering mountains will soon sink down. A path will open to facilitate advance. At each interview objections will seem less, and at last almost nothing.

There may be moments of reflection, when the spiritual obstacles may intrude. It then may be felt, that the attracted hearts meet not in Christ—that the needles point not to the same Polar Star.

But then hope whispers, that wedded union may soon lead to union in the Lord. The child of God will fondly trust, My tender teaching, unreserved counsels, strict example, holy walk, and fervent prayer, will soon issue in my partner's thorough change. Soon the one Savior will be our common trust and joy.

Here is ungodly compromise. No hope of possibly resulting good can justify ungodly means. This principle is rotten to the core. It has been the sluice-gate of a flood of crime, and girdled earth with zones of misery. Actions from such motive are manifest transgression and most fearful risk. SELF is gratified under pretense of winning souls. Presumption madly presumes, and arrogates the property of God. Can man convert? No! He alone who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," can give the light of Christ. To marry, hopeful of conferring grace, is to plunge into wild billows, dreaming that some life-boat may venturously rescue—or some plank may providentially afford escape.

Sometimes hearts are led on by misinterpretations of God's providence. The opportunities of communion—the combination of facilities—the disappearance of all hindrance—the mutual wish, are fondly received as tokens of divine approval. The thought is cherished, 'Surely this union must be of heaven, or the path would not thus open.' Blinded passion finds a providence in Satan's traps. No outward barrier appears—and their the sloping descent seems smoothed by a heavenly hand. Other beguilements soon spread their lures. Checking conscience speaks no more. Then alliance joins the godly and the godless. The gracious and the graceless pass under an unequal yoke.

Alas! what fearful folly—no, what undoubted sin! How visionary the hope of any sunbeam from such a cloud! What incongruity! How can two walk together, whose motives, principles, desires, objects, aims, pursuits are separate, as pole from pole? One seeks God, as the chief good. The other follows this world as the guide. One brings each matter to a throne of grace. The other only cares to know the policy of man. One glories in the cross. The other counts it as a weak dream. One prizes the blood, as all salvation. The other scorns it, as enthusiastic folly. One grieves, that earth, with its vast multitudes, is waging war against its rightful King—and longs to send the saving truth on eagle's wings abroad. To the other, Christ's glory is an empty sound—a thought without reality—a shadow without form. To find amusement in the vanities of time—to sip admiration from the cup of flattery—to flutter with the giddy moths around the blaze of merriment, is the

whole life. It would be easy, but more sad, to trace these paths of separation. Suffice to say, while grace is grace, it must tend heavenward—while the heart is graceless, it must shun God. Thus the sons of God and children of men essentially diverge.

What then are the baneful fruits? Can there be harmony with no connecting cord? Can there be happiness with such dislikes? Can there be peace without agreement? "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?" 2 Cor. 6:14. The house is divided. The family is at variance. The graceless may not gain. The gracious surely loses. For the spirit must be depressed. Zeal must be disheartened. Activities must be impeded. And mourning must sadly sit, where joy and gladness should sing cheerfully.

Ungodly alliance in the old world thus stands as a warning Beacon. Let the regenerate mark, and be wise. If they take partners from the charnel-house of Satan's empire, they gain no blessing, but a curse—no happiness, but woe—no solace, but discomfort—no help, but hindrance—no delight, but grief—no credit, but a shame. Woe waits on unions, which are not the fruit of earnest prayer—contracted for God's glory—cemented in His love—and wholly "in the Lord."

But marriage is a typical rite. It has a mystic meaning. It points to heavenly union. It shows the soul's alliance to the Lord. It brings Jesus before us in all His faithful love. He is the Bridegroom of the Church. The Church is His

affianced bride. In such espousal, all is right. Error here can find no place. Misery hence cannot arise. Disappointment cannot ensue. The bonds and fruit are altogether holy. The communion is one stream of sanctified delight.

Reader! has your soul formed this glorious contract? Are you cemented into Christ? Is your heart wholly given to Him? Is it one with Him in devoted love? Do His vows bind you? Is your life the happy service of a faithful spouse?

If hitherto you have lingered afar off, let this hour witness your glad espousals! Hesitate no more. Draw near. He never turns in coldness from the coming soul. Only behold Him, and your love must kindle. Mark well His beauty. Compared to Him, the sun is dark—the heavens are a cheerless blank—and nature's loveliest garb but as vile sackcloth. To see Him is to love. Behold His grace—His tenderness—His noble efforts to secure His bride. He leaves His heavens. He condescends to lowliest state. He spares not His very life. He sheds His blood to cleanse her. He hangs on the accursed tree to ransom her. He undergoes her every penalty. He bears her legal curse. He pays her every debt. He expiates her every sin. He endows her with all He is— with all He has. His righteousness is her robe. His heavens are her home. His throne is her seat. His glory is her portion. His eternity is her everlasting day. In this union there is no varying fickleness—no cooling affections—no partings. "I change not, therefore you are not consumed." Mal. 3:6 "I have loved you with an

everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Jer. 31:3. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." No treachery in her provokes divorce. He loved her in her filth and misery. He loves through all her faithlessness. He will love her through eternity's eternal course.

Reader! beware of Ungodly Alliance. But seek above all things this glorious espousal. Rest not, until you can truly say, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."

THE SPIRIT STRIVING IN VAIN

"My Spirit shall not always strive with man."
Genesis 6:3

Frightful was the havoc wrought by sin's entrance! Its scythe laid low all inward godliness. Its poison tainted the whole man. Evil seized the rudder of the vessel, and steered it far from God. Vile passions took the sway. Earth became a dark downward road to hell.

But still the devil was not thoroughly triumphant. Some power was soon found to counteract. Barriers beat back the flood of wickedness. The sweeping hurricane was restrained. The world was not unchecked rebellion.

Some captives were wholly rescued from the tyrant's grasp. Some souls burst from the tomb. They put off the grave-clothes. They went forth new beings with new life. In surrounding darkness, Abel had sight to see redemption's path. Amid a stumbling crowd, Enoch had strength to walk with God. In other cases, evil was checked—but not subdued—enmity was shackled—but not removed—conscience was roused—but not enlightened—convictions troubled—but no conversions followed.

This counteracting agent was God the Holy Spirit. From the beginning He worked mightily. Creation's morn witnessed His going forth. When earth was formless—void—dark—an unsightly chaos—a shapeless mass, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Genesis 1:2. Then lovely order smiled, and robes of beauty decked this lower world.

"By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Psalm 33:6. "By His Spirit He has garnished the heavens." Job 26:13. The skies obeyed His bidding, and sparkled with its canopy of orbs.

But these material wonders are but faint shadows of His inward power. *The soul is the theater of His grand exploits.* Here he sows seed for harvests infinite—eternal. But His interior dealings are wrapped in deepest mystery. The modes of acting differ. "The wind blows where it wills." John 3:8. Sometimes it rushes with the storm's furious force. Sometimes it sighs softly, as a summer breeze. Dissimilar, also, are the results. There are His special conquests. There are His common calls. Some men are His glorious trophies, Others are beacons warning not to resist His love.

These diverse cases claim our notice. Holy Spirit, come, now reveal Yourself!

There are the heirs of life. God in eternal counsels marked them as His own. The Son received them, as His bride—His body—His portion—His jewels— His delight. The Spirit knows them well. In right time, and in best way, He works His wonders in them. He finds them indeed, like other men, steeped in corruption—molded in evil—alien from God—blind in understanding— hardened in heart— Satan's willing slaves—wanderers in destruction's road— journeying without thought towards sin's last home. By heavenly rays He dissipates their darkness. He gives them eyes to see the beauty—the extent— the glory of the wondrous law. He reveals God and His attributes—God and His just demands. He implants the sense of terrible transgression. The sinner trembles and is full of shame. He feels, that countless sins doom him to eternal wrath. Then wholesome thoughts bud forth, Ah! where can I fly? Is there no refuge? Am I forever lost? Must I reap endlessly the dread fruits of my earthly course? Is hell my hopeless home?

Happy the day, which witnesses these inward throes! Nature never sows such seed. Their origin is always one. They are from heaven. They are inwrought by the Spirit's power.

But when the Spirit thus slays *pride*, and chases *ignorance* away, and leads into the valley of deep *humiliation*, the way is opened for reviving visits. He raises from this miry clay. He uplifts to a solid rock. He shows God's purpose of redemption. He tells the story of love, and grace, and mercy. Christ is revealed, ready to undertake the rescue—

powerful to achieve it. The coming to our earth in human nature—the cup of suffering emptied to its dregs—the blood, and all its cleansing power—the cross, and all its expiating virtue—the death, and all its ransoming effects—the sin-bearer, and His surety—agony—the curse-remover, and His liberating pains—the law-fulfiller, and the transfer of His righteousness—pass in review before adoring gaze. The contrite sinner looks—wonders—believes. He sees Christ—all mighty to save—all willingness to welcome. Subdued—melted—attracted—he ventures near, and nearer yet. He stops not, until he falls into salvation's arms. He sits down under Christ's shadow with great delight. He is persuaded, that sins are remitted—pardon conferred—God reconciled—heaven secured. Happy, glorious work! It is the Spirit's doing. He effects it in full accordance with eternal counsels.

He, who this begins, carries on the spiritual building to the glorious top-stone. He constantly makes fuller—larger—richer—more glowing, more enchanting revelations of the Lord. The soul gazes more intently. And as it gazes, it joys the more, and loves the more, and brightens into divine resemblance. The mind is changed into the mind of Christ. The new man is put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24.

Thus as the title-deeds to heaven are more clearly read and more devoutly prized, fitness for it ripens. The Spirit's daily visits daily elevate the walk. He is a guest mighty to warn—to teach—to guide—to cleanse—to purify—to

sanctify—to cheer—to bless. In loving arms he safely bears the happy saint above the billows of earth's stormy voyage. He guards him from the tempter's wily snares. At last He lands him in the haven of pure peace—the home of many mansions—the blessed Paradise of the saved. He gloriously prevails. He goes on conquering, until crowns of life encircle the Christian warrior's head. Thus every saved soul shines forever a monument of calling—enabling—sanctifying grace. They, who enter heaven, are born again by the Spirit's renovating power, and brought to Jesus by His conquering arm. He mightily commences, prosecutes, and ends the work. Omnipotence ceases not its marvels, until victory tramples down each foe. Every pilgrim saint on earth, and every glorified saint above, is evidence of these sovereign triumphs. Hallelujah to the Father! Hallelujah to the Son! Hallelujah to the Holy Spirit!

But all are not thus graciously subdued. Earth is thronged by multitudes, strangers to Jesus—never fleeing to His cross—never sprinkled with His blood. Hardened they live. Hardened they die. Is it then true, that the Spirit never knocks at their hearts' door? Have, they no outward warning and no inward check? Are there no gleams from above, ending only in darker darkness, and more aggravated woe?

Let it be repeated, that this mystery is deep. But Scripture is not silent here. And Scripture's voice is always echoed by experience. The word is full of teaching. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." It is a fact, then, that He

sometimes strives for a while, and ceases. He approaches, and withdraws. He comes again. Admission is denied. Visits become more rare, and then are discontinued. The knocks unanswered, faintly return, and ultimately die away. Inward stillness is no more disturbed. The soul sleeps on, and dreams into perdition.

It was so with the ungodly of the old world. The Spirit is the same in ages past, present, and to come. He strove not always in those wretched days. He strives not always now.

But still he strove before the flood. What was His mode of dealing? Annals are brief. But yet they give some glimpses. He gave loud testimony. He sent forth the thrilling note of truth. He raised up preachers to warn and call. There was *Enoch*. His trumpet gave no doubtful sound. With words clear as the very light, and dreadful as the thunder's roar, he told of coming judgment—and earth's final scene—and vengeance to the uttermost.

There was *Noah*. He stands on a high pedestal, as a "Preacher of Righteousness." His theme then would unfold our gracious God—glorious in justice—holy in His claims—and yet providing a covering for the sinner—a garment fit for heaven. Through many years he waved on high the Gospel-torch. In all these warnings and displays of saving love the Spirit put forth energy. Who can tell, what frequent terrors shook the hearers! How often the breast sighed—the heart quaked—the tears streamed; how again and again sin was seen as the worst foe, and vows were formed to leave it. But the emotions were

evanescent. The preacher ceased, and with his voice conscience resumed its stupor. The old allurements came. The Spirit was no more heeded. Impressions were obliterated. They were as words written on the sand. The coming tide effaced the whole. At last the heart became a very rock. Wave upon wave might now pass over it, wind after wind might now beat on it. But it continued rock. The Spirit ceased to strive. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

This appalling truth was thus appallingly exemplified. Reader! contemplate the fact. The mirror may reflect your state. Dealings with your spirit are patent only to yourself. Your heart is hidden from your neighbor's view. No other eye can read these solemn secrets. But you may be conscious, that frequently a voice has spoken in the inner chamber of your thoughts. You may well know, that an unseen hand has sometimes touched you.

Perhaps in the SANCTUARY, when men of God have deeply probed your troubled mind—and told of sin's sure end—of judgment near—of hell beyond—of flames, which never die—of worms, which ever gnaw—in terror you have resolved, that wrath's tremendous thunderbolts should never fall on you. But the fear lasted not. As the early dew it passed away. You still are what you have long been. You cannot forget the inward struggle. It may return no more. "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Perhaps when from the pulpit-throne JESUS has been most lovingly displayed—when in persuasive testimony

He seemed to come a very suppliant to your heart's door—when all His grace, and gentleness, and love, beamed beautifully before your eyes—then meltings within have moved, and your soul has spread its wings to fly with rapture to His ready arms. But you delayed. The hardening world again surrounded you with entangling chains. The warmth expired. You fell back into deadness. An attracting Savior receded from your view. Your dim eyes closed on salvation's glory. Will they see the luster of that light again? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

There may have been times, when thundering PROVIDENCE shook, as with earthquake-shock, the caverns of your slumbering soul. Some vast catastrophe, sweeping with relentless swoop multitudes into the unseen world—some desolating malady, stalking with death's scythe through the affrighted land—some sudden stroke, felling in life's prime a relative or friend—some strong disease, seizing with iron grasp your tottering frame—some loss of property, bringing chill poverty to sit beside you—some blighted scheme, presenting you with disappointment's cup—some cruel slander, casting foul blight upon the fairness of your name; these, or the like calamities, may have revealed the world's deceptive emptiness. Awakening from sleep, you have resolved to rise above such fleeting scene. Weary of vanities—alive to peril—your thoughts have turned to lasting joys and safety in the only Savior. You are conscious that the call was loud—was heard—was almost obeyed. But you paused. Earth's arts again put forth their witcheries. You are as far

from Christ as ever. Will like visitations visit you again? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Perhaps your eye rested on some BIBLE-WORD, or pursuing texts haunted your ear. Extraordinary light shone round you. Truth spoke in new and most convincing force. Time seemed to vanish. Eternity stared you in the face. Gigantic realities appeared gigantically real. You felt the duty and the wisdom of immediate change. But before you turned, some snare entrapped you. You are still unchanged. Will your Bible thus speak again? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Perhaps some FRIEND in pious earnestness grasped your hand, and reasoned, and implored. You confessed, "My course is wrong—I have no present peace—I dread the future; I hear of Jesus and joy and peace in Him. I will arise and seek Him." But no. You loitered in the world's foul ground. The opportunity was lost. No one seems now to care for you. Will friendly calls again call you? "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Reader! do you in these sad lines discern your very picture? Does conscience herein perceive a pathway trodden by your hardening soul? Then listen to a solemn note. It may be another and a conquering visit from the Spirit.

It would be murderous cruelty to conceal, that you are tottering on destruction's brink. You see there is a period in the downward course, when warnings warn no more.

The word, now ringing in your ears, proclaims, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

You have heard, also, of a "reprobate mind." This is no unmeaning sound—no shadow of an unreal form—no figment of imaginary woe—no term invented to give groundless terror. It is a sad description of a sadder state. It is the deathful blight of the out-poured curse. It is the midnight darkness of a soul drifted to realms uncheered by any Gospel-ray. Tremble, awake.

There is, also, a decree, which locks up in hopelessness—which paralyzes all the means of grace—which freezes all the streams of feeling—which chokes all the avenues of impression—which rivets the chains of Satan. God from His high throne may pronounce, "Let him alone." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Hos. 4:17.

Then the final curtain falls. Judicial deafness supervenes. The hardness cannot melt.

Analyze the dread decree. It blocks up all the channels, through which saving mercy flows. "Let him alone," my **MINISTERS**. When you set forth the Savior's love—and all the glories of His finished work—and all the pardon purchased by His blood—and all the peace of faith—and all the happiness of heaven—"let him alone." Let all be dark before his eyes. Let no sound pierce the deep grave of his soul. Hearing, let him not hear.

"Let him alone," my BIBLE. When his eye rests on brightest texts, inviting to the cross—warning of hell—depicting the eternal world—showing the ransomed with their harps of gold—unfolding the realms of agony—let the page be a vacant blank. Let every word be as a skeleton, breathing no life. "Let him alone."

"Let him alone," my PROVIDENCES. If the whole universe were convulsed with earthquakes—hurricanes—appalling terrors—desolating plagues, let him look on unmoved. Let him stand hardened by the open grave. Let him be hardened on the bed of pain. Let things most adverse, things most prosperous, be alike to him. Among them all, let his rocky heart become more adamant. "Let him alone."

"Let him alone," my SON. You are all love—all grace—all mercy. But love must not love him. Grace must not look savingly of him. Mercy must not yearn tenderly over him. Your blood must not cleanse him. Your cross is not for him a shelter. Your righteousness is not his robe. You have knocked often at his heart. Knock no more. "Let him alone."

"Let him alone," my SPIRIT. It is your property to bestow grace. It is your province to convince of sin. It is your prerogative to reveal Jesus. It is your glorious office to minister salvation. But leave him graceless. Break not his fetters. Give no sight of Jesus. You have striven often. Strive no more. "Let him alone."

Reader! what a Beacon you have here! Do you tremble? Then the decree has not imprisoned you up in condemnation. Be wise, and never trifle more. Heed every whisper of the Spirit. When He warns, turn! When He teaches, drink deeply of the lesson. When He calls, hasten with all speed. Quench not the first spark of His light. Never neglect His gentlest voice. Never resist His mildest drawing. Watch Him with intent gaze. Follow Him with instant step. Yield to Him in full obedience. He leads from sin—from self—to Jesus and to heaven.

Holy Spirit! seal for glory all readers of this warning!

THE FLOOD OF EVIL

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 6:5

A solemn scene here opens. Who can contemplate it, and shudder not? God appears looking down on earth's inhabitants. What sight meets His eye? It is wickedness—great wickedness. He sees evil—only evil—in every imagination of every thought of every heart.

Can it be so? Man who entered Eden's garden, the happy image of his God— who stepped upon earth's stage, decked in pure robes of innocence—whose early thoughts were only redolent of heaven—whose primal bias moved in the attraction of holiness—whose infant affections beat with the pulse of righteous love—whose dawn was the clear light of godliness—can man be now so changed!

How is the sparkling jewel tarnished! How is the bright gold dimmed! The crown has fallen from the head. The lovely robe is tattered. The features no more smile in beauty. The flower once fragrant is a weed. The holy nature is degenerate. Love hardens into enmity.

Blasphemy pollutes the lips so lately tuned to praise. The subject holds the rebel's weapons. The child is an apostate alien. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Man—can he now be so changed!

Yes! Sin has come with its debasing power. Alas! what ruin it has wrought! How terrible are its properties! How frightful are its effects! How desolating is its step! How withering is its touch! The garden of Eden—the beauty of all beauties—bloomed before it. It passed the gate, and the misery of all miseries followed in its rear. Man, lovely as a ray of righteousness, stood before the fiend. He parleyed with it, and became this mass of evil.

Such the change. And sin effected it. Reader! think deeply, that it is a fearful thing to stray from God. Behold the dark abyss, into which transgression fell, and hate the erring path. Mark these wide ravages, and loathe the spoiler. Contemplate a world undone, and utterly detest the murdering monster.

But, perhaps, while you survey the record, some doubting thoughts arise. The inquiry may intrude, 'Is this description literally correct? Are not the colors too darkly laid? Is there no rhetorical excess?'

Let such misgivings be cast out. They hold the germ of skeptic blindness. Nothing here can be exaggerated. The speaker is eternal Truth. If *man* had framed the sentence, it

might have been tinged by inability to judge or proneness to state incorrectly. But no created intellect here decides. God, the Holy Spirit, from His bright throne, makes the announcement. Heaven's voice sounds in the words, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God's all-piercing eye cannot read wrongly. The Spirit's hand cannot pen error. Let then all heads bow low. Let every ear devoutly listen. Let every heart assent. Undoubted truth speaks here with open mouth.

Thus with sorrowing reverence we draw nearer to the fearful picture. In the foreground stands "WICKEDNESS." This is a frightful monster. It is antagonism to our God. It rears a counter-standard to His will. It tramples down His laws. It defies His authority. If possible, it would scale the skies, and hurl Him from His throne. Its aim is to convert heaven into hell.

Whose is this wickedness? The "wickedness of man." Man, and man alone of all, who breathe the vital air, claims wickedness as his own. "We know, that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Rom. 8:22. But the blame is not theirs. Theirs is the suffering. But man's wickedness let loose the plague. "Cursed is the ground." Thorns and thistles bristle on its soil. But the fault is not in it. Man is wicked—therefore his abode is this disorder. Creatures endure much anguish—hardship—suffering—death. But their disobedience roused not avenging wrath. Man is the culprit. His crime sinks

earth into a slough of woe. The degradation is world-wide. The cause is wholly his. Wickedness is his sole property. Therefore, O man, see your exclusive criminality. Boast not of any excellency. Glory not of reason—faculties—power—mind—intellect—talent. Parade not your stores of acquired wisdom—your investigating knowledge—your elaborating skill. But rather blush, that your superiorities claim wickedness as their territory.

The picture next exhibits man's HEART. This is the home of the affections—the spring-head of desires—the cradle of each impulse. Here the character receives its form. This is the rudder of the life. This is the guide of daily life. As is the heart, such is the individual. Here schemes, and plans, and purposes are conceived. The heart is the mother of contrivance and device.

What is naturally transacted in this laboratory? The reply here meets us. "Every imagination"—every germ of idea—every incipient embryo of notion—every feeling, when it begins to move—every passion, when it stirs—every inclination, as it arises, is "only evil."

Frightful word—Evil. Here wickedness comes forth in another but not less frightful form. Evil. It is the offspring of the evil one. It bears the impress of the devil. It is foul, as he is foul. It is vile, as he is vile. It is accursed, as he is accursed.

"Only evil!" No ray of light mitigates the darkness. No spark alleviates the impure night. No righteous spot

relieves the sinful monotony. No flower of goodness blooms in the noxious desert. Uniformity without one check rules. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart" rush out in one stream. No rill finds other vent. All flow in the one channel of evil—"only evil."

Turn not too quickly from this picture. It is not yet complete. The full hideousness is "only evil continually." What! is there no respite? Is evil never weary? Does no intermission break the tremendous sameness? Ah! no. There is no moment of a brighter dawn. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." There is continually this miserable continuity. Thought chases thought with lightning-rapidity—but each is only evil without mitigation—without pause. Swiftly they rise and swiftly fly—but their wings are only evil—never flagging—never varying. Countless are these imaginations; but they all show one feature—evil continually. There is no better viewpoint.

Reader! the point is reached now for home-application. Draw back the curtain and mark the contents of your breast. Your own heart in its natural state is this flood of evil. Do you startle? Are you indignant at the charge? Is your first impulse stoutly to contradict? If so, it is a fatal sign. It proves decisively, that the imaginations of the thoughts of your heart are very evil.

When the Father of lights gives saving grace, then instantly the foulness of the inner man is seen! Then the illumined conscience testifies, "Behold, I am vile."

When the revealing Spirit uplifts the heaven-lit torch, then new-born vision discerns the sin-sick ruin. You cannot see—no, you deny—the rule of sin within you. But may not the plague—although unfelt—exist? Night hides, but cannot nullify, the landscape. Lack of perception destroys not surrounding realities. Appeal to a regenerate man. The response most readily asserts, that no description can exaggerate the flood of evil, which once deluged his heart. Charge him as shaped in iniquity, he meekly sighs—"Alas! how true! But, blessed be God! through grace, I am a new man now." But your experience is unconscious of a change. Therefore you are unchanged. And if you are unchanged, you flounder yet in evil's flood. May then the Lord of life give light—give sight—to see your own ailment in the mirror of these words! "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually."

But you reject this sentence as depicting yourself. You half hope that it belongs to some bygone days. You confine it to some long-past period of especial evil. You abjure its general features. You question its application to man's whole family, in every age.

But say, is it not a life-likeness of our first parents, from the moment of their fall? Behold them sinless. God was their hearts' delight. Behold them guilty. What is their conduct? Shame overwhelms them. Therefore evil has torn off innocence. Trembling occupies their hearts. "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Genesis 3:8. They spring not joyous

to the loved communion. They flee. They seek some covert. They shrink into concealment. Is it not evil to shun God? This is their desire. Thus the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts prove wickedness—great wickedness. They dream, that trees can hide them, from the all-probing eye. This folly is most evil! Evidence is clear, that evil now is the parent of their imaginations.

Adam, when called, speaks in reply. What are his words? Alas! we see no penitence—no humility—no cry for pardon. He avows his fear. Thus he betrays evil; for he allows that punishment is due. Adam's lips unwittingly attest that the imagination of his thoughts is now a flood of evil. When God probes deeper, deeper evil rises to the surface. The blame is cast on others, no, on God Himself. "The woman, whom *You* gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree." While Eve is charged as bringing the temptation to his hand, God is implicated, as bringing a tempting partner to his side. Can evil exceed this?

Eve, also, is now a flood of evil. She screens herself behind the serpent's craft. "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." The main sin is *another's*. I only yielded to seducing guile. Here then the broad fact stares us broadly in the face. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, from the first day of sin, was only evil. Each word—each act—the produce of each thought—was evil—only evil.

It is clear then, that evil gained universal sway in Adam's heart. Thus it poisoned the spring of future streams. It utterly corrupted the soil of human thought. Now the

source being unclean, cleanness cannot issue from it. It follows, then, that man in every age must enter life with a heart evil—only evil continually. "As face answers to face in water, so answers the heart of man to man."

Think then no more, that this portrait delineated peculiar vileness. Such was the first sinner soiled by sin. Such are all born in sin's family.

Reader! it is then your very state, as a corrupt branch of a corrupted tree. It is your pollution, as descending from this tainted fount. Until grace works its wondrous change, wickedness—great wickedness—prevails. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." Evil is the common flood.

But out of these materials God peoples heaven with a redeemed multitude, pure and glorious as Himself. Yes, through grace, there is relief large as the need. There is a remedy, mighty to heal the deepest depths of the disease. The sinner is not forever buried in hopeless guilt. God, from all eternity foreseeing the fall and its tremendous woe, devised a reparation wide as the breach. This gracious work is entrusted to his beloved Son. Jesus consents to take the guilty place. He opens on the cross the fountain of all-cleansing blood. The flowing stream is efficacious to wash away all sin. Its virtue obliterates all stain of evil. Thus, though iniquities are more than all wide ocean's sands, and each of deepest dye, the atoning death can make them whiter than the purest snow. The blood of Jesus touches them, and they forever vanish.

They recede far as the east is from the west. They sink from discovery, deep as the sea's unfathomable depths. The believer's wickedness doubtless has been very great. The imaginations of the thoughts of his natural heart have long been only evil. But not one speck of all this vileness can be found. The glorious merits of the dying Jesus have expiated all. Sin has done its worst to ruin; Jesus has done far more to save.

But Jesus meets the children of His love with more than cleansing blood. He clothes them also with His robe of righteousness. He, in their nature and their stead, obeyed to the utmost all the holy will of our most holy God. He places this obedience to their account, as if it were the garment wrought by our own hands. In this they stand at heaven's portals, and the gates fly open. Their plea avails. They are counted befitting inhabitants for the palace of the King of kings—fit partners for His very throne. Sin destroyed creature-righteousness. Jesus brings in a divine righteousness.

But the Gospel-mercy is richer yet. Nature's heart, is, as has been shown, a quarry of vile materials. It cannot be mended. These stones can frame no holy fabric. But grace works wonders. The Holy Spirit comes, and a new creation springs to life. He takes away the stony heart. He creates it gloriously clean. Thus old things pass away. Thus all things become new. The moral desert smiles fruitful and fragrant as Eden's garden. It rejoices and blossoms as the rose—Isa. 35:1. Instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree—instead of the brier comes up the

myrtle-tree—and it is to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off—Isa. 55:13.

The love of God is implanted. Delight in evil is rooted up. Conformity to the image of Jesus is inwrought. Holy communion and holy ways are now the sweet delight. Heaven is longed for, as the realm of perfect purity. The call to cross death's Jordan is welcomed, that sin may be forever left behind, and sinful sounds no longer vex, and sinful sights no longer pain, and sinful temptations no longer trouble. The soul longs for scenes, and company, and atmosphere, where all is love. The believer's wickedness has doubtless been very great—the imaginations of the thoughts of his natural heart have been very evil; but he is born again. Sin made man very vile. The Spirit enters, and a new fabric rises. Blessed be God for His sovereign work of grace! Blessed be God for Jesus and the Spirit!

Reader! this Beacon tells you what man is by nature—what you were by birth. Say, what is your present state?

THE FLOOD OF WATERS

"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die."

Genesis 6:17

We now reach the most dreadful scene which earth as yet has witnessed. Horror of horrors darkly frowns. The whole world lies drowned! Depths of waters have gone over it. What Beacon can be more appalling! Its warning speaks loud as thunder's roar. It terribly proclaims that righteous wrath is no vain dream. Each drop in this unsparing deluge cries piercingly, 'Behold sin's merits!' What seeds of misery are sown by it! How deep is the cup of vengeance in its hands!

Holy Spirit, send now especial help! Shake deadness from our hearts. Quicken dull ears to hear. Implant poignant conviction of the malady and its misery. Disclose the evil and its curse. And then display the Gospel in all the brightness of its rescuing love.

Let the curtain gradually rise on this wide desolation. God speaks—"Behold I, even I, am going to bring a flood of

waters upon the earth." There must be some mighty cause. What can unbar these fearful sluice-gates? The cause, indeed, is mighty. The effect is mightily commensurate. God saw the whole earth flooded with evil. Can evil thus dwell—and vengeance slumber! This cannot be. The flood of wickedness calls for flood of punishment.

But God proceeds not without avowal of reluctant sorrow. The preface to this sentence states—"It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at His heart." Genesis 6:6. Thus condescendingly He speaks as man to man. He adopts, as His own, feelings known to our experience. He comes down to the level of human intellect. Let not the statement be misinterpreted, as denoting fickleness in the great "I Am." The deep channel in His immutable purpose cannot change. With Him "is no variableness neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. The announcement only prepares for altered action, such as human agents show, provoked by disappointed hopes—goaded by pained spirit. Abounding wickedness begets results, which men would naturally expect, if any work regretted and bewailed, had become grief to the designer's heart.

We are thus guided to the dread resolve. Patience can endure no more. Outraged attributes claim vindication. The righteous sentence therefore is pronounced—"I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth—both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air— for it grieves me that I have made them." Genesis 6:7. "Man, who treads earth, the glory of

creation—the mirror of My skill and power—the home of undying life—made in My very image, after My likeness—crowned with authority over lower beings—man shall be swept away—and not man only, but with him all the living world. Sin has made him abominable. He has infected nature's universal range. The stain is universal. The ruin shall be universal too."

Reader! pause here. Crowds of solemn reflections press forward. Check not their dreadful voice. They loudly proclaim that iniquity is a monster wholly hated by our God. Can it be otherwise? He is holiness too dazzling for mortal eye to view. How can He tolerate unholiness? He is purity too vast for human intellect to grasp. Can He be lenient to impurity? He is righteousness too perfect for imperfect words to open out. Can He endure unrighteousness? His whole essence and being—are Holy—Holy—Holy. His word, His throne, His heavens, are Holy—Holy—Holy. How then can He look down on sin? How can His indignation sleep, when He surveys a world filled only with transgression? Reason alone concludes, that the wicked cannot stand in His presence. Revelation tells us of anger justly rising, and vengeance justly smiling. The present fact adds fearful confirmation. "God looked upon the earth; and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth." Genesis 6:12-13

But tenderness still grants some respite. Even now God strikes not without a pitying pause. He loudly proclaims, that wrath is kindled and fury ready to break forth. But still a forbearing hand seems slow to execute.

Where is the sinner who goes down unwarned into the pit? An unseen hand often restrains with gentle touch; a voice within often persuasively reminds, that ruin follows sin—that against it heaven's gates are barred; and all God's attributes are armed; and all God's universe will rise—that for it hell burns—and the fiery lake is heated; and the everlasting chains are forged.

The annals of the old world prove this. When the avenging arm is raised, mercy pleads, 'Not yet!' Truth announces, that the inevitable end should come, but forbearance checks the final step. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man—for he also is flesh, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3.

Here is a respite. Here is space to think—to weep—to turn—to pray. The space, also, echoes with tidings of God's grace. A faithful teacher is raised up. "The patience of God waited in the days of Noah." 1 Pet. 3:20. To the last moment faithful lips proclaim a refuge. "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." Can we proceed without pondering this lovely picture of a saintly man! Amid the flood of evil he lived, the first of human race, graced with the more than royal title of "just" or righteous. In this name the principle of his life appears. God in His sovereign love, and by the mighty

power of His spirit, implanted faith in his heart. Thus he "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Heb. 11:7. His enlightened eye discerned redemption's distant day. His enraptured heart entirely embraced salvation's scheme. His confiding soul reposed delightedly upon the God-man's work. Thus he was righteous in the Righteousness of God. Faith in the heart must be uprightness in the life. So Noah was perfect or sincere amid abounding wickedness. He walked in the light even as God is in the light, and they had fellowship one with another. He could not be silent. The zeal of a saved soul must blaze. The sun cannot be dark. The fire cannot be ice. The ocean cannot but swell with flowing waves. The vigorous tree cannot be barren wood. He who knows Christ cannot be mute. Gratitude must work. Love must extol. Faith must point to the dying Lamb. The faithful subject must proclaim the King. So in this interval Noah raised his faithful voice.

He preached loudly by voice—loudly too by deeds. A refuge was revealed to him. The ark—a graphic type of the Deliverer, Christ—was to be built. "By faith," he diligently worked—Heb. 11:7. Through many years of tarrying wrath he toiled. It is instructive to stand beside him in his persevering labors. It is no visionary thought, that countless sneers and keenest ridicule would oftentimes mock. Unbelief would jeeringly deride a work so strange—a ship too vast for any waves to float, constructed on dry ground! Designed to save from unknown billows—from a flood signaled by no foreshadowing marks! In it two of every living creature to

be housed! What instinct would direct them! male and female side by side! who would thus select and guide! the fierce, the tame, to consort in peace! where would their food come from! how shall Noah's household live uninjured in their midst! what turmoil—contagion—uproar—peril—fights! These, and like jests, would shoot their venom at his heart. But he looked up to God—away from earth. Faith made him quick to heaven's voice, and deaf to man's reproach. Thus they persisted—he in obedience—they in sin, until the set time arrived.

Is it not so now? Unbelief still lives. Its atmosphere is the secret, or muttered, or uttered sneer. But fast comes on the time, when faith shall triumph— unbelief shall perish. We read this in the end of the old world. The decreed years by sure advance reached their appointed goal. No unusual signals seemed to have marked the nearing of the avenging waters. There was no wail above. There were no tremblings below. The sun poured down its usual rays. The skies presented their clear canopy of blue. Nature shook not with foreboding terrors. Earth seemed at peace. The groves were melody. The fields waved happy crops. The guilty inhabitants rose to their daily toil and sin. Nothing disturbed the dream, that the course of events, which had always been, would continue forever. "They were eating and drinking—marrying and giving in marriage"—"and knew not, until the flood came and took them all away." Matt. 24:38-39.

Fearful scene! appalling ignorance! destructive blindness! besotted folly! But in defiance of awakening warnings,

such catastrophe will be poured out. What says the Lord? "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The returning Jesus stands at the door. His chariot-wheels are ready to descend. His saints are bounding towards the glorious advent. Prayer is ever crying, "When shall it once be?" "Come Lord Jesus—come quickly." But that day of days will find the godless world asleep—busied with its daily triflings—drunk in besotting merriment. Stupor will introduce despair.

Was not the old world thus startled? The ark receives the faithful remnant. The Lord's hand bolts the door. And then the heavens darken. The burdened clouds lower. All nature trembles. The storm breaks. There is no more delay. The rain descends. The showers increase. The waters fall in ceaseless torrents. Floods from above stop not their fury. Springs from beneath heave up their streams. What a moment for astonished man! What terror would thrill through the stout-hearted, when first the fear assumes real form. Can the Preacher's threat be verified! Is it so—that earth shall be a watery waste! Truth—found to be *truth too late*—stares them in the face. They look upwards—nothing but waters fall. They look around—the earth seems to be dissolving into ocean. Where shall they flee—to lofty buildings—to trees—to hills—to mountains? Alas! deliverance is not in them. Waters follow with their rising swell. All refuge fails. There is no respite in the falling deluge. There is no ascending above the ascending tide. The work of sure destruction surely goes forward. Death stalks abroad unchecked. The rich—the poor—the noble—the peasant—the lettered—the ignorant—the *young*—the

old, lie in the one embrace of drowning throes—they are all swept together to one tomb of waters—they all disappear beneath one covering flood. No cries avail. The ruin cannot stop—no wringing hand—no smitten heart—no bended knee—no upward look—no contrite tears—no agony of prayer—no loud acknowledgment of guilt—no arms extended towards the ark, can mitigate the execution. Perishing multitudes find too late, that God is true, see too late wrath gone forth to its work, and feel too late the iron-pressure of its hand, and learn too late the bitterness of being lost.

Ah! with what anguish do they now see the ark borne peacefully above the billows. What sharp remorse contrasts the happy safety and the dread despair! The thought now burns them, as a fiery coal—oh! that we had been wise—that we had listened—that we had not closed our ears—that we had not hardened our hearts—that we had not madly resisted every warning—that we had not wilfully defied destruction! But we would not hear—and this is our desert. We would not turn—and this is the result. We would have our sin— and these are sin's wages. Once we *would* not have our God, and now we *can* not.

Reader! seek profit from this end of sin. See not in vain the whole earth one charnel-house. Gain wisdom from this wide reign of desolation. Ponder what the Holy Spirit inscribes upon this recording pillar. "All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people. Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land. Every living thing on

the earth was wiped out—people, animals both large and small, and birds. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat." Genesis 7:21-23.

The ruin was thus sure and vast. All terms are brought together to depict life totally extinguished. Death in wide-spread arms embraced all breathing beings. One unsparing scythe felled all living things. Sin had spread very largely. Destruction overspreads it. Crowds of sinners thronged the earth, and they are crowded into a grave of billows. Man's pollution had polluted the world and all its contents. All, therefore, are thus swept away. Sin is no trifle. It cannot go unpunished. A deluged world sighs a sad proof. This wrath was visible. But there is wrath beyond—far worse—eternal.

Now look forward. Another flood draws near. It is decreed—denounced. God's word foretells it. God's holiness requires it. God's power will bring it. God's wrath will inflict it. Have you not heard—do you not know—that "the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men?" 2 Pet. 3:7. The world, profuse in iniquity, is ripening as dry stubble for these flames. Patience again will reach its limits. The fiery deluge is ready to devour. Vengeance will soon unloose the final woe. Say then, what will be your case, when this last flood of flames glares terribly? Are you delivered from the wrath to come? Are you secure within the one appointed Ark?

Happy, thrice happy they, whose glad response can testify, that, through abounding mercy, they are locked safely in the arms of Jesus. Nestled there, they know no fear. In Christ they are at peace with God—cleansed in expiating blood—robed in glorious Righteousness—sanctified by the indwelling Spirit—newborn by transforming grace. Thus they await, calm in heavenly joy, the coming of the day of God—in the which "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. 3:10.

Thus beside the Beacons of just wrath, may these pages always place the glorious cross. Amid the threats of righteous judgment, may they ever sound the Gospel-note of full redemption. Above the warnings of perdition, may they wave the banner of salvation. If earth's loftiest mountain were the Pulpit—if the thunder's loudest clang were the voice—if the assembled family of man composed the audience, let this proclamation issue, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1.

The curse of the Law thunders in vain around them. It fell on Jesus in their place, and was exhausted on His head. It should no more scare—for it can no more harm. God's justice—the inexorable foe of every sin—no more presses its claims. It is now their advocate. It pleads, that full satisfaction has been made, and payment rendered to the uttermost. To punish those who died in Christ, would be

unjust. Their death is past. They sit above the coming flood. They soar above these everlasting miseries—saved with everlasting salvation—blessed with everlasting blessedness. Soon they will shine forth, glorious in everlasting glory—waving everlasting palms—hymning everlasting praises—joying in everlasting joys. "The Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended."

For them there is no flood of wrath—no flood of fire—only a flood of glory!

THE RAVEN

"He sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth."

—Genesis 8:7

Blessed are they, who find their constant pleasure-ground in the luxuries of the Bible! They commune with the mind of God. They listen to a heavenly voice. They bask in rays of purest light. They feed in wholesome pastures of refreshment. They fear no poison from the weeds of error. No devious path can lead their steps astray. Wisdom from above guides sweetly them. The Spirit, as high Teacher of the Church, instructs the students. They advance safely, happily, from grace to grace.

The lessons are vast, as the mine from which they spring. They are pure, as the realms to which they call. They warn of sin—its filth—its misery—its end. They unfold Jesus in all the glories of redeeming love. They exhibit holiness, as the road to holy heaven.

Reader! heed a salutary admonition. Study the Bible, as holding treasure for your soul. Study in the earnestness of prayer. Study with eternity outspread before you. Study with the lowliness of a poor sinner before a speaking God.

Study with faith devoutly grasping every word. Close not the volume without inquiring, "Is sin more hateful—the world more worthless—the flesh more treacherous in my sight? Is Jesus brought nearer to my adoring soul? Is my heart won to more entire devotedness? Am I more resolute to live for Him, who died for me?" The lively word should thus give life.

But this teaching is more than mighty in its matter. It is attractive in its varied mode. It charms by inexhaustible diversity. It summons all creation to its service. It traverses the universe of things alive and lifeless. It uses all their stores, as handmaids to profounder truth.

A few flowers, culled from this spacious garden, will illustrate this. It looks above, and from the wonders of the skies brings testimony to Redemption's nobler work. The *orb of day* proclaims the Sun of Righteousness. The glory of the lovely light is typically significant of "the true light." "I am the light of the world—he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. The glittering *star* has a Gospel-voice. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Rev. 22:16.

It looks to the earth, and Christ is seen throughout the countless produce. The stately tree—the fragrant flower—the flowing stream—the living stone—the riches of the mine, and all the length and breadth of its immensities, call us to adore "the chief among ten thousand."

So, also, the world of animal life inculcates thoughts of highest import. The lion, ruling the forest in his might—the ox, not ignorant of its owner—the donkey, quick to discern its master's crib—the washed swine returning to the mire—the gentle flocks reposing in the meadows—the goats cast out from the fold, and other tribes, warn by their peculiar characteristics. Each seems to say, 'Immortal souls may harvest deep profit by observing me.'

Among these monitors the *feathered* creation occupies its place. To each of this class some specialty belongs. These different species are not given in vain. The mind, which framed their diverse instincts, writes on each some admonition.

Sometimes the lesson is distinctly drawn. Sometimes nothing but the habit of the winged one is stated. The reader is left to ponder it in meditative prayer.

Such is the case of the first bird named in sacred annals. Its notice is brief. It appears when the waters of the deluge were partially assuaged. Noah had been told by God what God alone could tell. The coming of this ruin had been distinctly announced beforehand. No human means could ascertain when thus the floodgates of heaven would open, and all the fountains of the great deep be broken up. This then was taught by a revealing voice. But God fixed not the moment of *departure* from the ark. Deity instructs sufficiently, but not superfluously. What reasoning powers can discover, no inspiration will unfold. When ordinary

means suffice, no miracle will interfere. Noah by natural resource must learn, when earth again shall be dry ground.

He seeks aid from the winged inhabitants of the ark. He selects the Raven. He sends it forth on embassy of observation. "Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, and he sent forth a raven." Genesis 8:6. In vain he waited. There was no return. It brought no tidings. Its wings beat not again against the window of its departure. It sought no more admission into its former shelter. "It went forth to and fro." It wandered up and down. It found some resting-places perhaps on the loftiest crags of the reappearing mountains. It was content to perch on any height. It was well pleased to feed on any floating carrion. It cared not where it perched, or where it gained support, so long as it had no restraint. It left the ark, pleased to escape. It left the ark, never to re-enter.

My soul, mark well this wandering RAVEN. It gives a warning. It speaks of disappointment. Noah expected its return with tale of earth's revival. But it came not back. It cheered him not with an assurance that the destroying waters were assuaged—and desolation's reign was past. It gave not the solace of abated ruin. It never said, 'Go forth—walk up and down in peace—peril has ceased—earth is again a dry abode.'

From all the streams of teaching flowing from this spring, let that be heard which is most vitally instructive. Let us then first observe an allegoric emblem of the Moral LAW. Doubtless no such lesson is primarily designed. But profit

may be incidentally deduced, when not originally meant. The soul intent on holy growth, may gather flowers in a field tilled to render other crop.

It is sadly true, that many turn to the Law for life—for peace—for righteousness. But can its voice proclaim these blessings? It is, indeed, an ordinance—godlike in majesty, sublimity, and truth. It is seated on a glorious throne. It is a picture of Jehovah's mind. It shows the lineaments of His eternal essence. It is wondrous in brevity—infinite in extent. Love is the substance of its whole requirement. Love shines, as the dazzling crown upon its brow. Love is the one channel of its course. But still it is so boundlessly expansive, that its wide arms embrace each thought—each word—each work of all, who ever trod, or shall tread, earth.

It announces, that deviation from pure Love is utter abomination in God's sight. It points to heaven and cries, 'Love is the one atmosphere of that bright home. Nothing breathes there but Love.' It stands as a guard before the shining portals. It drives back all transgressors of its grand enactment.

View now the sinner's breast, when penetrated by the Spirit's light. Conscience instantly accuses of transgressions—as many as the moments of existence—towering high as mountains piled on mountains—extending in multitude, as all the sands of ocean's shore—embodied in each act—sounding in each word—staining each thought. Will the Law draw softly near, and wipe

away all tears, and silence fears? Will it bid gloom to disappear? Will it diffuse the calm of heavenly peace? Will it show wrath appeased—and vengeance satisfied—and deathful weapons laid aside? Far otherwise. The Raven brought no happy tidings. The Law can tell no tale of comfort. It leaves the soul in deepest cells of uttermost despair. It pays no soothing visits. It has no cheering note. It has no messages of reconciliation. It raises not from terror's agonizing depths. It only affrights with its inexorable threats. It thunders, 'Give me my due. Pay the full debt contracted by offence.' But the insolvent cannot pay. Therefore the curse must fall. Thus it inflicts banishment from God—exclusion from the realms of blessedness—consignment to the prison-house of hell. Thus it piles anguish upon anguish, which never can relax, until the ages of eternity shall cease.

Reader! study the Law profoundly. Ponder its breadth—its length—its depth—its height. Gaze with open eye upon its perfect purity. Mark well its large and just requirements. Realize your own infinite shortcoming. See your whole life one mass of violation. Mark, how it fastens condemnation on you. View its high barrier, excluding you from heaven. Weigh its strong chain, dragging you to hell. Take the inevitable truth. It has no word of peace. It never pardons. It gives not life. It surely dooms to death. Expect not help from it. No, flee far from it. If you escape not, it will surely slay you. The Raven cheered not the inhabitants of the ark. The Law brings no relief.

Noah, disappointed, sends forth another messenger. The DOVE speeds her gentle way. She tarries not. She soon relieves the anxious fears. Her welcome wings are heard again. Joy brightens at her glad return "When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth." Genesis 8:11

This leaf relates a happy story. The waters are abated. The destroying element has subsided. Peril has fled away. Security again smiles. The detaining doors may now be opened. Earth is again verdant. Solid ground invites returning steps. Let now thanksgivings rise. Let praise ascend. Let man reoccupy his renovated home.

Here is a lovely emblem of our GOSPEL! What the Law announces not, is sweetly published by glad tidings from above. Welcome, thrice welcome news resound from heaven. Floods upon floods of joy unspeakable issue from Zion's heights. Full salvation is revealed. On earth peace, good-will toward men, are gloriously proclaimed.

Hearken, O children of men. Give ear, my soul. Would that all earth's sons, from East—from West—from North—from South, could be the audience! Would that all might hear the faithful sayings of the blessed Gospel! Christ is the first and last—the sum and substance of this noble word. Christ—chosen—sent—anoointed—accepted of God. Christ—wondrous in His person—the mighty God—therefore infinitely glorious to save. Christ—very man, therefore entirely qualified to represent the family of

Adam. Christ— loving from everlasting to everlasting, with love knowing no origin—no end— no intermission— no degrees—with love always unchangeably the same— perfect—pure—intense—enduring. Christ—hanging on the accursed tree— laying down His life a sufficient ransom-price—by His blood closing the gates of hell— quenching God's fiery wrath—paying all demands— satisfying every claim—glorifying every attribute— washing out each crimson-stain of all His ransomed flock. Christ—gloriously fulfilling every iota of the glorious Law— saying to each command, 'I fully have obeyed'; and then transferring the vicarious obedience, as divine righteousness, to His bride the Church—her robe for heaven—her luster in the courts above.

Christ—purchasing the Holy Spirit, and sending Him to bless the Church with all His powers to teach—to sanctify—to comfort—to adorn—to beautify. Christ— rising from the grave, a proof, that God is satisfied—and all redemption fully earned—a pledge, that the ransomed in their turn shall put on the beauties of a resurrection body, worthy of a resurrection-state. Christ—ascending to the right hand of the majesty on high, representing all His people in Himself—bearing their names upon His shoulders and His heart—receiving all gifts for them— pouring down all blessings on them. Christ—coming to institute a glorious reign—to change the living—to raise the dead—to execute eternal judgment—to fill all heaven with glory—to awaken the eternal song of never-ending hallelujahs.

O my soul, what a flood of tidings of great joy! Spring forth to welcome them. Stretch forth your arms to clasp them. The Law frowns condemnation. The Gospel thus smiles salvation. The wrath is gone. Destruction's billows are no more seen. Dismiss all fears. Annihilate your shivering doubts. Tremble no more. Open the gates of liberty. Go forth, as Noah, upon the renovated earth. Walk up and down in the green pastures of delight. See all around you verdant and redolent of peace. Enjoy. Give thanks. Lift up the voice. Sing praises. All things are yours—the world—things present—things to come—all are yours—and you are Christ's—and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. 3:21-23.

Following the Gospel-voice, we dwell as lords of a wide universe of peace. We lie down in green pastures—we feed beside still waters. The hand of love makes full provision. Goodness and mercy follow our steps, as the attending shadow. This Gospel flies from heaven, assuring us, that God, even our own God, shall bless us. Thus, like Noah's dove, it calls us forth to liberty and joy.

All glory to the Gospel of free grace! All glory to the Gospel of eternal life!

But mark again the *Raven*. We may learn much from its *departing* flight. Without unduly giving wings to imagination, we may here trace silly worldlings in their silly ways. To such, the Gospel-ark is not a welcome home. Its holy boundaries are uncongenial. They flee its pious inhabitants. They shun its righteous shelter. The

easy yoke galls, as an enfettering chain. The light burden is as a heavy bondage. They give the wing to their unbridled passions. They are carried away by wild desires—and craving appetites—and raging lusts. Their feet speed hastily from spots, where Christ is the one testimony—where God is lovingly adored—where eternity in vivid colors is brought near.

O my soul, take warning. Make the Gospel-ark your constant dwelling-place—your much-loved home—your safe retreat—your all-protecting shelter. Dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. Abide in Him, and He in you. Nestle sweetly—rest securely—in the screening refuge of His wounds. fStray not away from Him. There is a beacon, also, in the Raven's restlessness. It wanders to and fro, and never settles. Worldlings wandering from Christ find no repose. Tossed up and down, they lead a weary life. Hurried here and there, they are strangers to all peace. Some vain allurements offer rest. They seek it only to take early flight. Another spot invites. It promises much, and disappoints the more. Behold the fretting waters of the troubled sea. They represent the constant motion of the unfixing mind. Thus always craving—never satisfied—the weary votaries of earth drag out their uncalm days.

O my soul, have you found Christ? The true believer sweetly sings, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Song 2:3. Shall God say of *Zion*, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it?" Ps. 132:14. And will not you

respond, *Christ* is indeed my rest forever? Nothing shall tempt me from my home of joy.

The Raven's food erects another beacon. What nourishment could it find in the drowned waste? What, but the putrid remnants of the floating carcasses? Thus worldlings starve their souls amid the husks and carrion of their pleasures! Their maxims are false, and therefore poisonous. No wholesome nutriment is there. Their cup of joy at best is flavorlessness. Contrast the banquet-house of faith. The WORD luxuriantly contains supplies to cheer—to strengthen—to refresh. The PROMISES, what animating cordials. The truths of the CROSS, what a well-stored table! Jesus is the bread of life. The soul partakes and lives. The prospect of the HEAVENLY REST, what a rich feast! "Eat, O friends—drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved." The LOVE OF CHRIST, how invigorating! "Your love is better than wine."

Reader! be always a guest at this table, and "eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

If any worldling should peruse this page, may his eye turn not again to that poor cheat, the world. May it look to Christ, and never look away! He is sure rest. He is safe refuge. He is *a treasury of all delights*. He satisfies, until the full soul can hold no more.

DRUNKENNESS

"After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent."

Genesis 9:20-21

How frightful is this spectacle! Man lies bereft of reason—stripped of consciousness—impotent to think—powerless to act—degraded lower than the level of the beasts—wallowing in the sink of filthiness. Who is this man? Many feelings urge us to turn aside—to look away—to close our eyes. The sight of sin cannot but distress. It is the misery of earth, that it resounds with evil sounds, and presents vice at every turn. But this scene meets us in the Bible-page. Therefore we must pause and ponder. The Spirit cloaks not the dreadful fact. No screening mantle hides. It is exposed to open light. Readers are bade to mark it. The Beacon is divinely raised. It may not be ignored. The Church in every age must fix on it a mourning eye.

This man is Noah. How lovely in his early record. Amid a world of wickedness, he shone as a ray of purity. While earth seemed one vast wilderness of sin, he bloomed a fragrant flower, and showed the fruitful branches of a healthy tree. His first mention proclaims him as beloved of

God. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Genesis 6:8. Distinguishing mercy enriched him with choice favor. His elevated conduct proves this heavenly preference. It follows, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. Analyze this character. He is "just." Therefore faith reigned in his heart. It is a foremost principle of truth, "The just shall live by faith." Noah is entitled "just." Therefore he lived by faith. This grace is a fruitful tree. It was so in Noah's case. He was sincere and upright amid the crooked of his age. He strove against the downward stream. He took each step in holy fellowship with God. He sought heavenly guidance. He leaned on heavenly support. Thus he boldly trampled down sin. Thus he moved Zionward in the narrow way of life.

When hearts are filled with truth, the lips cannot be mute. Hence valiantly he preached. Earnestly he warned. Plainly he taught. Faithfully he denounced sin. Regardless of reproach and ridicule, he uplifted the Gospel-torch. He called the dead to rise and live. He told of wrath just ready to descend—of judgment near—of the sure wages of transgression—of all the terrors of avenging justice. He showed both by type and word the only refuge.

This and much more flows fully forth, from his next title, "Preacher of righteousness." 2 Pet. 2:5. While he thus lived and labored, wondrous revelations cheered his soul. God visited this favored child with intimations of the coming end. He was instructed to frame a saving home. He believed and prepared the ark. When the set time had

come, what frightful marvels terrified his sight! He saw the falling deluge—the panic of the doomed world—the misery of multitudes vainly battling with death—the waters swelling over drowning crowds, He heard their agonizing cries, until silence brooded over lifelessness. How would he tremble at the fruit of sin! How would he bow in reverence before God rising to take vengeance! But he saw and heard, realizing *his own deliverance*. While others perished, he was preserved. While wrath slew masses, it spared him. His humble heart would doubtless confess, 'By grace I am thus saved!' How would his rapturous praise bless the Giver of such unmerited distinction. How would his supplicating lips implore, that mercy's shield might ever guard him!

The time arrives for departure from the ark—he treads again earth's solid pavement. He stands on the ground cleansed of its defiling inhabitants. His gratitude again would burn in joyful blaze. His heart's one pulse would throb with adoration. His lips would pour forth an overflowing stream of warm thanksgiving. This is inscribed on his earliest act. Before he rears a dwelling for himself, he builds an altar to the Lord. The God of his grace—his mercies—his rescue—his salvation—merits and receives his instant worship. On this altar he piles many victims. Each represents the one sacrifice for sin. Each proves, that in lively faith he looked to the atoning Lamb of God. Each tells, that he well knew and truly loved the Gospel-hope.

How beautiful is this view of pious faith! Heaven always smiles on faith. It was so then. It is so now. It shall be so, until all faith's work be ended. God seems now to open wider the treasury of heaven, that richer blessings may crown his servant. He constitutes him lord of the earth, and of earth's fullness. And lest the fear should ever arise, that falling showers might swell into another flood, he gives assurance of security. He adds a brilliant witness in the skies. A rainbow of varied hues spans the skies—a seal of the covenant of safety from watery ruin. "God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all the creatures upon the earth." Genesis 9:17. Was ever man so encircled with favors? Surely these *golden chains* will bind him to unbroken walk with God.

Alas! the thought arises as a bright morn, soon to be obscured with clouds. *Noah was but man*. Filled indeed he was with copious streams of grace. But still he was but man. And the word is ever true, "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Ps. 39:5.

He now proceeds to cultivate the ground. The deed was right. The labor was his duty. God does not call His servants to idleness or ease—to folded arms, and slumbering sinews, and unemployed powers. Sloth is the mother of all evil—the nurse of frightful crime. It must not sit down in faith's household. Adam is placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15. The Gospel-precept is, "My son, go work in my vineyard to-day." "Not slothful in business," is the believer's rule. View Noah,

industrious in his vineyard, and frown not on commendable toil.

The earth made rich returns. The trees brought forth abundantly. The luscious juice presented wine to renovate the strength and to restore the worn-out frame. Here was precious blessing. Let thankfulness receive, and moderation moderately use. Let the cup be sanctified with holy praise.

But ah! this is a world of snares. To be beyond temptation is to soar high above this earth. Beneath the flower the viper lurks. The pathway is beside a precipice. The goblet may beguile. The use may exceed bounds. In the deep draught there is poison. Overmuch brings death. There is no mercy incapable of abuse. There is no privilege, which may not be misused. The cheering wine may make a drunkard. The strengthening bowl may hurl a saint from his high pinnacle. Could it be so with Noah? Fact must be heard. The record cannot be erased. Noah "drank of the wine." Who can blame this! God gave the wine as a legitimate support. But the misery is here. "He drank of the wine and was drunken." Who will not sigh! Who can restrain the pitying tear! Alas! that such a sin should foully stain so great—so good a man! But it is so. His sun goes down behind this darksome cloud. This miserable blot pollutes the beauty of his name. This vile transgression soils his pure career. The day cannot be cancelled. The deed cannot be recalled. Intoxication was incurred. Concealment cannot hide it. The sin was done. Noah—the glory of the ancient world—the first fruits unto God of the

new world is dishonored, as the first drunkard. "He drank of the wine and was drunken."

All sin is frightful in its nature—fearful in its course—destructive in its outcome. The devil kindles it. God hates it. Wrath pursues it. But where is the sin so pregnant with all evil as drunkenness? Mark its effects upon its miserable victims. It puts out the lamp of reason. It quenches the light of every faculty. It cripples every power. It destroys each spark of consciousness. Behold the besotted man. His eyes possess no more the property of clear perception. His ears receive not the true sound. His feet refuse to lead him in straight paths. His tongue gives vent—at best to folly—more frequently to blasphemy, and every vileness. Ah! what a spectacle! No beast is so degraded. No fiend outside hell's confines can be more foul. He lies contemptible below contempt. He is a powerless victim open to all assaults. The walls are broken. The gates are open. None guard the portals. All foes may enter in. There is no vigilance to discern approaching destruction. There is no arm to ward it off.

Amnon lies murdered. Absalom's vindictive heart arranged the scheme. Absalom's servants gave the deathful wound. But Amnon's hands received the stupefying bowl, and thus laid bare his bosom for the blow. "Absalom told his men, 'Wait until Amnon gets drunk; then at my signal, kill him!'" 2 Samuel 13:28. He was smitten and he fell. His soul awoke from drunkenness in realms where sleep can sleep no more.

Behold Israel's king Elah. He is in Tirzah, in the house of his steward Arza. The feast is splendid. The goblets sparkle with enticing wine. He sits high in the banquet, "drinking himself drunk." The crowned drunkard is defenseless. Zimri enters and spares him not. He falls into the grave of drunkenness. He goes hence to meet a drunkard's doom. 1 Kings 16:9.

Benhadad, king of Syria, invades Israel. Mighty is his army. Victory seems near. Who can resist the overwhelming troop! But the 'God of battle' leads on His people. Israel's little company advances against the invading host. Now mark the state of the insulting Syrian. "Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions—he and the kings—the thirty-two kings, that helped him." Thus their power was gone. Vain the sword—the spear—the horse. A drunkard cannot use his own resources. So the Syrians are destroyed with a great slaughter. Drunkenness strips them of their power, and renders them an easy prey—1 Kings 20:16.

Who has not pondered Belshazzar's evil end! The Babylonian monarch "made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." "While he drank the wine," he rushed into enormous *sacrilege*. He called for the consecrated vessels of God's temple. They drank wine from the *holy* bowls. In mad idolatry they praised the gods of gold and silver—of brass—of iron—of wood—and of stone. But now what terrors seize the besotted monarch and his guilty guests! The Lord from heaven by a fearful miracle announced the kingdom

ruined, and the king rejected. "And in that night was Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, slain." Dan. 5:30. Thus drunkenness uproots kingdoms, and slays kings.

Ahasuerus stands forth guilty of childish folly. When did this silliness occur? Was not excess in wine the moving cause? It is recorded, "When the heart of the king was merry with wine," he gave the indecent order—Esther 1:10.

Who has not mourned the holy Baptist's cruel murder? But what brings in this dreadful crime? Herod on his birthday made a supper for his lords, high captains, and chief rulers of Galilee. Reason was extinguished by the exciting revelry. The oath was rashly sworn. The savage order was sent forth. The Baptist lies a mangled corpse. His head is placed upon the platter—a fit dish for such a feast! Oh! wine, what have you done? "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging." Prov. 20:1.

But drunkenness pollutes not only the high halls. It is not restricted to *royal* robes and *golden* bowls. It is not limited to station, climate, or place. It spares not humble dwellings. It cruelly invades the village—the hamlet—the rural lanes—the crowded alleys. But wherever it appears, it comes a heartless and destructive pest. Unhappiness in every form attends its steps. Sickness, and withered frames, and early death are its sure fruits.

Whoever would contemplate wretchedness—let him mark the wretched drunkard. Whoever would see misery—let

him enter the drunkard's home. Whose are the trembling limbs—the feverish pulse—the aching head—the restless mind—the gnawing remorse—the hardened heart—the reckless disregard of reputation—the stifling of conscience? These woes are the drunkard's lot. He is unhappy, and the cup is his relief. He drinks again to lull remorse. He awakens to deeper sorrow, and to drink the more. The more he drinks, the more he thirsts. Disease soon shows its face. The bodily and mental powers fade. Trembling imbecility follows. So the drunkard goes downhill to a drunkard's grave.

Whose is that wretched home? Poverty and filth have the possession. Neglect and squalidness occupy it as their own. The wife, unaided and downcast, with weeping eye and broken heart, sees hopeless poverty. The children, famished—naked—untaught—proclaim the shameless father's hardened heart. The wages, needful to sustain them, supplies the parent's poison. This is a drunkard's home.

It may be that some drunkard's eye reads this. If so, most mighty Spirit, make this entreaty mighty for his rescue! Friend, stop. Cast down the murdering cup. Taste not another drop. Touch not. It is sure ruin. Enter no more the haunts of sure destruction. To stop may be recovery of health—of name—of character—of happiness—of competence—of peace. To advance is recklessly to dig your early grave; and, what is worse, to fasten endless torment on your soul. Friend, stop. The devil strives to lead you on. He has succeeded hitherto. But he cannot

compel you. Resist, while yet you may. Withstand your cruel foe. Friend, stop. The holy Savior yet may save you. His glorious prerogative is to receive sinners. He never casts the coming suppliant out. Your sins are frightful. But He can pardon all. Your heart is hard. But He can soften it. You are in fearful case. But He can snatch you as a brand from the burning. Renounce your vice—resolutely—at once. Turn, and you may be rescued from sin—from hell. Turn, and you yet may enter heaven.

But drunkenness assumes a darker phase, as linked with Noah. An aged—a long-tried—an experienced saint is entrapped in this snare. No warning can be louder. It speaks with trumpet-tongue. We learn, that no advance in grace can raise above the devil's far-extending arm. No lengthened walk with God mounts to a path above his reach. Holiness of many years screens not from Satan's assaults. While flesh is the tabernacle, there is danger. While earth is the home, it will be haunted by this untiring foe. There is no moment when the watch-tower may be left. The constant attitude must be the bended knee. The arm must ever wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the eternal Word. The shield may not be laid aside.

Believer, open your eyes widely to your real position. Bright indeed are your hopes. The Lord, who bought you, watches you with unflinching love. The angels are your guards. The Spirit is your teacher. The Word is your textbook. Heaven is your final home. Your eternity is glory. You will not fail finally. "He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil.

1:6. Your God will perfect that which concerns your soul. But still Satan never ceases to hate and tempt. Draw then nearer and nearer to the sheltering side of your beloved Lord. Let your eyes ever gaze upon the cross. The more you see redeeming blood, the more you will abhor iniquity. Trust not, however, to previous grace. It was sufficient for its day. But each day needs its own supply. This help is ready. The treasury is open. Approach by faith. Go in by prayer. Receive heaven's bounty. Seek, also, in all things to be conformed to Jesus' image. He was "holy—harmless—undefiled—separate from sinners." Heb. 7:26. Above all, feast on the precious promises—so will you cleanse yourself "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7:1.

But still remember, that each day is full of peril. Therefore never cease to watch. Do not forget, that in one unguarded moment a terrible downfall may occur. Think, also, that one false step brings terrible disgrace on your good reputation, and causes hell to laugh, and all the enemies of God to revel in blaspheming sneers. Your sin may ruin multitudes. Therefore, for your soul's sake—as you love Jesus—as you desire the progress of His truth—as you would cause the Gospel to be honored, be very careful—abstain from evil's contact—let your light shine brightly.

FILIAL IMPIETY

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him."

Genesis 9:20-24

The earliest days of earth witnessed sin in full-blown magnitude. The monster was quick to raise a giant-head. Every succeeding morn has dawned on its tremendous work. Each swift-flying moment has been stained by its defiling touch. The world has never known a respite. The sluice-gates have not closed. The terrible stream has ever flowed.

When but one household lived, this plague of evil crept in. Sin took its seat amid that little company. The seed of the serpent even then hated the child of faith. Cain rose in wrath. The righteous Abel fell a murdered corpse.

After a course of sinful years, the flood cleansed earth of its polluting inhabitants. Then one domestic band occupied the renovated soil. But sin went forth even among them. The drowning waters have not destroyed it.

In the *young* world brother slays brother. In the *renewed* earth a son, with impious recklessness, treads down a venerable parent. In the one case, fraternal ties afford no shield. In the other, the love, the reverence, which are the father's due, daunt not the assailant. A brother's blood is shed. A father's fame is mangled. There is no adamant like unto sin's hardness.

This last enormity now meets us. It is deeply steeped in misery. It is a cup filled to the topmost rim with bitter waters. It is a picture, in which each shade darkens blackness with blackness.

Noah, after a long life of saintly eminence, gives forth a sad occasion. In thoughtless moment he deviates into sin's path. He thus provokes the unnatural blow. He foully falls, and by his fall he slopes the way for the son's fouler evil.

Partaking of the produce of his vineyard, he gives free reins to unrestrained indulgence. He drinks, until he lies a drunken man. Reason is thus beclouded. Consciousness becomes bewildered. He is outstretched within his tent—helpless—besotted. His walk had long been heavenward—but this unguarded moment hurls him from his lofty pinnacle. He sinks into shame's lowest depths.

Here crowds of mournful thoughts arise. What savage joy would fill the heart of Satan! What shouts of triumph would pervade his hellish realms! What a victory would now elate him! How surely will he mangle the victim caught within his net!

Results—so sure to follow—suggest most strong entreaties to each child of God. Beloved, realize your countless calls to pure and blameless life. Consider what observation ever watches you! What scrutiny marks your every step! What devouring tongues will magnify your least offence! They, who are prone to fabricate unreal faults, will surely magnify unquestionable shortcomings. What, if you stray? Vice boldly triumphs. Religion is bespattered with all sneers. Taunts openly proclaim, that all men are alike in secret life. Insinuations whisper, that the worst are they, who falsely claim a higher standard, and cloak iniquity in vile hypocrisy.

It may be, also, that *beginners in the heavenly walk* are startled and discouraged. Inexperience falters, and perhaps turns back. The early spark of piety is quenched. The world wins back the victims struggling from its grasp. Satan's chains again are tightened around the prey almost escaped.

Thus grievous faults in God's children are the direst wounds to pure religion. The Savior's name is profanely mocked. His holy truth is blasphemed, as a lie. The narrow way, which only leads to life, is ridiculed, as truthless

scrupulosity. Believer, would you not die for Christ? Resist, then, sin unto the death. Yielding, you may wound Him, by whose stripes you are healed.

Noah's shame soon sees the light. But whose step first crosses the threshold of the tent? Who first perceives the misery? What eye first rests on the dishonored patriarch? His youngest son is guided to the door. This seems a gracious providence to screen the fallen. Exposure would be probable, if some unfeeling stranger should behold. An alien might be not careful to conceal— no, rather prone to propagate. But Ham, Noah's son, is the discoverer.

Can he, with unweeping eye, and with unsorrowing heart, discern the fact? Can he fail to use all means to cloak the infamy? Can he seemingly rejoice in this enormous blot? Can it be, that his lips can open to proclaim it? Can he hasten to make known the fall? Can he reveal it even to his brothers?

Stand aghast at the occurrence. It is written, "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and *told his two brothers* outside." Genesis 9:22. Oh! vile iniquity—most hateful hardness—most unnatural cruelty—most abominable impiety! The greatness of the sin is announced terribly on the instant sentence, "Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him—and he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." Genesis 9:24-25.

We are thus brought with mourning hearts to analyze this sin. Ham sees the fall of a tried saint—an aged patriarch—his father. He weeps not. He conceals not. He hastens to expose.

Here is hardness not melted by the dews of heaven. Here is the recklessness of a man touched not by the Spirit's gentle power. Here is a startling proof, that the old heart is the nest of every unclean bird—the home of every ungodly passion—the spring of every loathsome stream—the deadly tree of every poisonous berry—hostility to God's family—intense aversion to the loveliness of grace—the image of the old serpent. Ham in the dawn of post-diluvian days, as Cain in the morning of the world, was only *nature's offspring*—shaped in iniquity—conceived in sin—one of the viper's brood—and therefore wholly a mass of hatred to the heirs of faith.

Here is the spring of this appalling conduct. Ham's breast beat not in sympathy with Noah's habitual piety. No, rather, his inner man was thoroughly a counter stream. He long had marked the current of the saintly life. He had observed the close walk to God. He hated the light. He writhed beneath the brightness. He had received long trains of truthful teaching. But the good seed found no prepared soil. No root was taken. No fruit sprang up. Alienation rejected. Enmity abhorred. His taste was wholly worldly. His deeds were only evil.

And now an unlooked-for opportunity was obtained. He found his father plunged in the mire of sin. His godless

heart felt hellish joy. He cannot spare. He will not pity. He rushed, as a wild beast, to devour the prey. He called his brothers to the spectacle. No reverence for the long-witnessed godliness of his father restrained him. No love for such a father checked him. No reluctance to revile so high a name hindered him. Hatred of truth found matter for its sneers. A damaging fact was in his hand. He glories in his triumph. And thus, on the wreck of his own father's fame, he erects the Beacon of Filial Impiety.

Frightful indeed is this Beacon. The writing on it fully **DISPLAYS NATURE'S VILENESS**. It hoots away the weak fallacy, that man's own heart is naturally filled with seeds of excellence. No, rather, it shows it as a magnet pointing to evil, as its polar star. Social life and salutary laws may stand a *barrier to the outbreaking*. But such restraint reaches not to the *root* of the disease. The chained tiger loses not its wild ferocity. The dam, which checks the tide, gives not an upward course. *A mask may hide the face, but it imparts no beauty to the covered features!* Culture may expand the intellect, but it implants no spiritual affection. Whenever nature is only nature, however curbed or tutored by external factors, it still remains a sprout from evil's root. Hence the necessity of new birth in order to become heirs of life, "Marvel not, that I say unto you, you must be born again." John 3:7. Hence the all-pervading change, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature—old things are passed away—behold all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17.

The Beacon next shows NATURE DELIGHTING TO DISHONOR GRACE. Its hatred burns against the Lord—His blessed truth—His humble followers—His holy cause. When godliness shines forth, and casts sweet rays around, and wins commending notice, and shames depravity, and draws attracted souls to Zion's ways, the sight is wormwood to the serpent's seed. They cannot wholly defame transparent truth. But they will rush in to calumniate, if the least door be opened. What, if a good man be entrapped! What, if sparks long stifled blaze again! What, if unwary steps descend into the crafty snare! What, if the tempter gains unhappy mastery! Then what vile triumph! What open sneer! What base reviling! *What eagerness to expose! What efforts to magnify!* What stout denial of religion, as a real principle! What insinuation, that piety is only fraud! What weak conclusion, that Gospel-walk is an unreal show! What a loud cry, that they are not the worst, who wear no mark of Christianity! What venomous jeers, "Come see this saint! Ah! ah! it is as we suspected!"

Few saints reach heaven but through some storms of pitiless reproach. Distinguished indeed are they, whose constant wariness—and tight adherence to the Lord—and unremitted prayer, guard them from giving cause to blasphemy. While we lament that blame too often soils the little flock, one precious comfort cheers us. We look to Jesus, the Lord our righteousness. He passed through years of life, pure as a sunbeam penetrating hovels of uncleanness. Mark His challenge, "Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin?" John 8:46. Mark the often-

repeated acquittal, "I find no fault in Him." Mark the unexpected testimony, "Have nothing to do with that just man." Matt. 27:19. Mark the impartial witness, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Mark 15:39.

But throughout His ministry a bitter enemy stood ever by His side. Judas, who was a devil, watched His every step—heard His every word—the companion of His public walk—the comrade at His private fellowship—the attendant in His loneliest retreat—John 6:70. Had there been one moment of unguardedness—one approach to devious path, greedily he would have seized—cruelly, also, he would have denounced. But when remorse fixed its tormenting fangs in the self-loathing traitor's breast, then he pours forth the accurate confession, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matt. 27:4.

Blessed be God! All praise to wondrous grace! Earth has seen "Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1. His faultless obedience was wrought out for His Church. It is their beauteous robe. It is their glorious clothing. It is imputed to them, as their own deed. It is their title to the heavenly kingdom. It is their rich adornment through eternal ages. It fades not with revolving years. It cannot change its changeless hue. It ever shines bright as very Deity. Believer, clasp it. Delight in it. Trust in it. It cannot fail. Commend it. It exceeds all praise. Glory in it. It is worthy. But its full beauty you will never see, until heaven's day reveals it. Its perfect worth you cannot know, until you receive the crown, which it has earned—the throne, which is its due. Your best righteousness is but a filthy rag. Your

too frequent falls bespatter you with mire. But your Jesus is unsullied purity. And all His purity decks you. The hands, which wrought righteousness, bestow it. In it you triumph. In it you reign forever.

But a still darker feature deforms this Beacon. It is a son, who wounds a father's name. Ham tramples upon Noah. He joys in this delinquency. He revels impiously in the parental shame.

Godly parents cannot secure godly offspring. Only the Spirit achieves spiritual work. The homes of unconverted children nurture no harmless vipers. No bond of trustworthy affection unites the ingrates. Darkness cannot love light. The chained lion may not reach the neighboring lamb, but if occasion favors, the savage beast will show devouring fury. The ties of parentage cannot erase hostility to grace. The race of Ham will last, while earth abides. He was not slow to mock, and to pull down the father's pyramid of worth. What has been, will be again, if opportunity be given. The hoary head—the sacred claims—the recollection of long years of love—the experience of all guardian care, are a weak covert. The unconverted heart cannot spare piety. It breaks down all barriers. No sanctity can keep it back. It godlessly will rush to desecrate even a loving parent.

"Noah awoke from his wine." Forgetfulness is short. Consciousness returns. He opens his eyes on the realities. He is sensible of his own grievous fault. He is cognizant, also, of his own son's impiety. He "knew what his younger

son had done unto him." Can he fail to loathe himself, because of his own evil? Can he fail to loathe himself the more, when he perceives that *his sad fall has led his own child into black waters of enormity?*

A good man's sin may be exposed to many eyes. But God alone sees the deep humiliation of the wounded spirit—the many tears—the earnest cries for mercy—the self-abhorring anguish—the increased self-distrust—the life long grief. Noah would well learn, that the atoning blood was rich to wash out all his crimson stains. He would not doubt that divine righteousness would completely cloak his terrible defilement. But, pardoned by God, he never would forgive himself. Until the grave covered him, he would walk lowly—contrite—with downcast head—with bleeding heart—with many a self-condemning thought.

But now the Spirit of the Lord moves mightily in the patriarch's heart. His lips are guided to pour out predictive woe. "Cursed be Canaan—a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." The father's sin must have on earth a terrible result. A father's eye must foresee misery hunting his son's progeny to their last race. A father's mouth must utter the malediction.

While Noah thus spoke—how would his heart quiver—how he would loathe his drunken day—how would he quake, when thus branding line after line of his descendants!

But tenderness is mixed in this agonizing trial. The father is not called to mention Ham. This bitterness is withheld. The curse is fixed on the next generation. Canaan's name is named.

It is outside the purpose of this tract to show how a long race of poor and abject slaves have verified the dreadful doom. Tribes upon tribes in iron bondage—under cruel yoke—oppressed—degraded—scorned—maltreated worse than laboring beasts—have proved that Ham's impiety has cast a blighting shadow over descending clans. The curse has fallen heavily.

Reader! do not forget, that every sin is linked with an eternal curse. The misery begins in time. But it does not stop there. Onward it rolls. Forward it extends.

Reader! flee all sin. You may see its first step. You cannot trace its last. You know how it pollutes earth. Can you tell how it embitters eternity?

Believer, bless Jesus with adoring love. He has redeemed you from each curse. This is not all. He blesses you with every blessing.

BABEL

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Genesis 11:9

Many millions throng the earth. But from one home they spread. The source is the same. The ark contained the parent stock. The progenitors of the human race all sat around Noah's table. The family and the speech were one.

Presently, the languages are many and unlike. The medium of vocal communication varies more than the changing climate. A multitude may speak together, and all be strangers to each other's minds.

Whence came this discrepancy? It obviously exists. But the existence is not the fruit of original constitution. It is no natural result of time's advance. The lapse of ages would not produce it. Ingenious guesses may attempt a solution, but flimsy guesses contradict themselves. Research may weary itself, and gain no safe conclusion.

One book alone conducts to the reply. The Bible is that Book. One author only fixes the date. Moses alone gives the explaining story.

Reader! come now, and in this sacred record learn the origin of diverse languages. It will be no surprise to find, that sin opens the sluice-gate. *There is no jar—no discord—no confusion in this world, of which sin is not the baneful root.*

The scene commences as a tranquil morn. The first word of our chapter simply tells, "The whole earth was of one language and of one speech." Genesis 11:1. When common prayer sought common blessings, one sound approached the throne of grace. When common praise proclaimed the common gratitude, one chorus swelled with melody. All joys—all sorrows were related in one note. One was the language of business—of sport—at home—abroad. None spoke but every hearer understood. Through the whole family uniform utterance prevailed.

Thus the progeny of Noah reached Shinar. Here is an area of widely-spreading plains. It invites them to construct a settled home, that weary wandering may cease. The tempter suggests the thought. They yield. *The waters of the deluge had not extinguished evil passions.* Outward judgments expel not rebellious lusts. The heart is still strewn with the stubble of iniquity. A little spark will kindle quick combustion.

Thus at Shinar impiety works impatiently. They murmur, "Shall it be that we thus roam, unsettled as a rolling stone, or chaff of summer threshing-floor— hurried from place to place, a homeless horde? Is it not wisdom to concentrate our numbers? Unification will secure our fame—oneness will consolidate our power, and raise us high in firm magnificence—free—independent—feared."

In accordance they concoct a godless plan. "Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness! This will bring us together and keep us from scattering all over the world." Genesis 11:4. Let mighty walls extend around, and shield with defense our one vast dwelling. Let a gigantic tower arise, whose top may scale the skies. Let the whole earth admire our impregnable abode. The skill is ours. Materials abound. Arise, then, let us build.

We have not far to search for the vile motives of this impious plot. The sacred narrative withdraws the veil. "Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness!" Genesis 11:4. Vainglory says—"let us build a monument to our greatness!" Believer, do not attempt to construct a name for SELF. There is a name provided for you. It is a refuge, high, glorious, sure. No enemy can level it. No skill can strengthen it. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower—the righteous runs into it, and is safe." Prov. 18:10. Build not with rubbish of your own, when such a fortress is prepared.

Vain-glory ("ostentatious pride, especially in one's achievements" –editor) where is the heart in which this monster has no nest? It is the common rudder of man's life—the pole-star of his course. Self-exaltation is the secret spring of exploits—labors—toils. It urges the warrior to the camp and field—it nerves his arm, and drives him undaunted through unnumbered perils. The student, intoxicated by this cup, refuses rest, and leaves no stores of literature unexplored. Behold the splendid palaces—the noble castles which adorn the land. View the monuments of ingenious art—the grand productions of elaborate skill. Read volumes in which rare genius sparkles in each page—the mighty exploits of commanding mind. On these a true inscription would record—"These works were designed to win a name among the sons of men."

If such be the prompting motive, the end is disappointment's bitter cup. The world pays only misery to its poor slaves. A mocking shadow is pursued. No substance is ever grasped. Did Babel-builders gain renown? A name, indeed, they have obtained. But it is a name of ignominy. They raised a monument which tells their shame.

In after days, at this same spot, we find this passion ruling the Chaldean king. See him walking in the palace of his vast empire. His words proclaim the inner pride, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan.

4:30. Did he long strut in this self-exaltation? While he yet spoke, Divine displeasure frowned. Men cast him out, as lower than the human race. He herded, fit comrade, with the mindless boasts. Thus soaring pride earned low contempt. The haughty monarch groveled with the brutes.

He best subserves his fame, in whom all SELF is slain. Jesus in all things is our perfect model. In Him SELF had no life. He "pleased not Himself," He never sought His own renown. One zeal consumed Him—to glorify His heavenly Father's name, and to bring honor to His holy attributes. Paul ranks the chief of heroes. How was his fame won? Mark the principle of his heart—the precept of his lips. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Phil. 2:3. He thus walks humbly in humility's low valley—"according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death—for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:20, 21.

How dismal is Babel's contrast. Indeed, the constant history of the unrenewed will is a mirror reflecting SELF. Here is the common impulse, "Let us make us a name." Where SELF is thus the idol, God must be dethroned. These builders give proof. The wide city—the high tower are planned, "lest they be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." God's will is here defied. That will had

said, 'By them the earth shall be replenished.' To accomplish this prohibited idle clustering in one spot. It required constant march and wide diffusion. Ease must be denied. God called them to move. They willed to tarry. The command is, 'Let earth be visited in all its parts.' The reply is, 'We will not be thus scattered.'

How sweet again to turn to Jesus. How lovely are these earliest words, "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" How refreshing is the continued echo, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." John 6:38. How brightly consistent is the sequel, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Matt. 26:39. In that prayer which soars on sublimity's high wing, we are taught to eschew this Babel-building spirit. "Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

At Shinar this vainglory and self-will resolves to have no Lord. Therefore the work advances. The scene is busy. What rapidity of motion! What energy of mind! What industry of hand! Each look betokens fervent interest. Strength is put forth. Sinews are strained. Deep are the foundations laid. Firmly the walls are cemented. What can withstand them? Success seems sure.

But is God oblivious of the daring effort? Are His eyes closed? Is His mind indifferent? Are not His ears open to this din? Is His hand shortened? Have His resources failed? Has He no power to check? Shall worms of earth now triumph? Shall their name eclipse His? Shall their

impiety prevail? How easy again to open the windows of heaven, and pour down an overwhelming deluge! How easy to cause earth to gape, and swallow in one grave the workmen and the work! How easy to bid lightnings from above and flames from beneath to make wide Shinar one smoking furnace! But no—judgment shall go forth indeed; but in new form. The scheme shall be most marvelously blighted, and all succeeding ages shall bear a brand to tell the tale of this sin's due reward. The Lord decrees, "Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand each other's speech." Genesis 11:7. God speaks, and it is done.

Return to the scene. The morning dawns. Fair nature smiles in usual beauty. The heavens—the earth—foreshow no coming marvel. All things around are ready for advance. The men are conscious of no inner change. They speak as heretofore. They shout—they cry—they call—they joke. But now amazement fills them. All is confusion. Each marvels at his neighbor's barbarous tongue. Each stares and questions, What does this dissonance mean? Is it insulting mockery? Has reason lost its seat? Doubtless they revile—reproach—expostulate and rage. Anger can only augment disorder. Discord is universal. Means of communication are utterly departed. Intelligence has ceased. There is no common tongue. There is no intelligible word. Thus the work finds a pitiable end. Humbled—defeated—mortified—disgraced—they part, because all mutual communion is gone. "In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the earth; and that ended the building of the city. That is why the city was called Babel,

because it was there that the Lord confused the people by giving them many languages, thus scattering them across the earth." Genesis 11:8-9

From that day earth has been Babel. Language continues diverse. But the difference warns solemnly. It tells the sure defeat of all vain-glory. It derides pigmy creatures boasting to defeat Divine decrees.

Stop, proud man—stop! Let Babel check your childish dreams. You will awaken to the inheritance of scorn. Stop, rebel—Stop! You rush against the shield of Omnipotence. If God has spoken, it will surely be. All His resolves stride gloriously onward to their glorious end.

But Babel is not all dark. A Gospel ray here shines. Doubtless its main feature is requiting wrath. But look again; there is a smile of grace. Division of languages proclaims God's hatred of vain-glory. But for all evil a remedy is ordained, and gift of languages shall spread the Gospel tidings through earth's surface. Behold the miracle of Pentecost. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4. Thus inspired heralds sounded salvation's glories, and the name of Jesus in every tongue—in every climate.

Think, also, of heaven's one harmony. No dissonance shall vex those blessed abodes. One chorus shall swell from the countless multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. The one loud cry shall be "Salvation

to our God, which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" Rev. 7:10.

ABRAHAM IN EGYPT AND AT GERAR

"Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

Genesis 12:13

Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister."

Genesis 20:2

When grace subdues the heart, a wondrous change ensues. Earth knows no greater. But words are weak to picture it. Images lend not sufficient aid.

Light shines, where once night brooded. Satan's chains no more enslave. The prison-bars are broken. Right principles direct. Right ends are sought. Right means are used. Life now is life indeed, for the man lives to God. Such is a feeble outline of the new creation.

But is sin therefore dead? Wounded indeed it is. But like the gashed snake it retains power to sting. Sometimes it revives in fearful strength. Though crippled, it strives to conquer. It may seem for a season to regain its hold, and win brief victory. It may roll the new man in the mire. But it cannot keep him down. Its real dominion is gone. Its

existence only lingers, until full escape from this world delivers wholly from its touch.

Where is the saint who is not conscious that the foe still lives? Witness the closet of the man of God. What bitter humblings! what smitings of the breast! what sensitive laments! what writhing under the motions of corruption's filth! Tears, sobs, and cries are frequent. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." Faithful Scripture warns of this constant conflict. It tells, that the heavenward march is over treacherous roads, where many pilgrims slip and stumble! Earnest exhortations call to watchfulness—to prayer—to use the shield of faith—to gird up the loins of the mind—to fight the good fight of faith—to give no place to the devil.

The honest page is often darkened, also, by recitals of sin's unexpected outbreak. Sudden eclipses hide the brightest orbs. The glittering star falls quickly from the sky. Waters lately so calm, cast up mire and dirt. Thus instances divulge, that sinful nature continues to be nature, even where grace has undoubted seat.

This Beacon gives a graphic proof.

ABRAHAM appears. How marked with special favors! How enriched with heaven-born powers! How crowned, as God's distinguished child! Heir of what hopes! Laden with what treasures of high promise!

He dwelt in early youth, an idolater in an idolatrous land. In nature's darkness "he served other gods." Josh. 24:2. In due time the God of glory reveals Himself. He calls his servant to leave Chaldea's godless scenes. He guides to a home typical of heavenly rest. The pilgrim holds as a staff, grand promises and assurances. Light, bright as Bethlehem's star, beckons onward. The distant horizon sparkles with illimitable blessedness. His ears hear heaven's pledge, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great—and you shall be a blessing, and I will bless those who bless you, and curse him that curses you, and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3. Could faith ask more? Could heaven give richer hope? Surely the owner of such promises will stand as a fortress garrisoned with all strength! He will have feet, which never can be moved—a hand, which never can hang down—a heart, which never can know doubt! All fear must be forever banished! Far raised above misgivings and alarms, this blessed one will boldly march on solid ground throughout earth's pilgrimage.

The trial comes. Grace must be tried. Rare is the faith which boldly resists. Happy the hero, whose eye never looks off from Jesus. Beloved, you must encounter winds and billows. Heed them not. Gaze only on your Lord. Thus you will never sink.

The trial comes. Provisions fail. Famine grievously prevails. Abraham meditates to seek sustenance in Egypt's

fertile fields. Is this an act of faith? He holds the pledge, "I will make of you a great nation." Shall he tremble, lest dearth of food should nip this sure hope? But he distrusts, and he turns his face towards Egypt.

We find that one sin leads to more. Temptations seldom come alone. One knocks. If the door be opened, a troop will enter.

It was thus with Abraham. When he draws near to heathen-land, he looks on Sarah. Her countenance is lovely. Beauty so rare will rivet admiration. In her attractiveness he sees danger for himself. He reasons, she is mine—she may not be another's, until I be removed. If I be slain, what will check the wishes of a foreign suitor! Therefore surely I shall die. Has then the promise been recalled, "I will make of you a great nation?" But faith succumbs to fear. He suggests falsehood to his wife. "Say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and my soul shall live because of you." Genesis 12:13.

Thus in full sight of evil he proceeds. The net is spread before his eyes. He knows it, yet he flees not. Evasion promises safety. The evasion involves falsehood. Untruth is his scheme of security in Egypt. The plan is godless, yet he scruples not to act it out.

Reader! perhaps you bask in sunshine of especial favors. Perhaps you boast, that the promises are yours. Still you

are not above temptation's reach. You still may tamper with sad sin. Abraham thus sinned. Beware.

The land is reached. Sarah is seen, and eyes admire. Her lovely countenance is praised. Pharaoh hears. Into his palace she is conducted. The denial of the wife shields Abraham. But Sarah totters on the brink of foulest shame.

The Lord interposes. In spite of themselves the culprits are rescued. Great plagues trouble the king, and all his court. The cause is revealed. The pretended sister is in truth a wife. The conniving patriarch is summoned. What shame would cover him, when thus a heathen's lips reprove! "What is this, that you have done unto me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?" Genesis 12:18. Why did you lay this trap before my unconscious feet? Then safe from injury the patriarch is dismissed.

Sad is this sight. The child of God—the heir of heaven—the chosen progenitor of the world's Savior is downcast in discovered guilt. He stands abashed before a worshiper of stocks and stones. What shame would fill his heart! He had distrusted the living God, whose power was boundless—whose hand was never-failing refuge. He had brought plagues upon a guiltless house. Merited reproach now stings him to the quick! Where will he hide his face? What time will dry his penitential tears? Surely henceforth his trust will be un failing—his courage will never flinch again—his zeal for pure truth will be unquenchable. Untruth will he hated, as a vile monster—the touch of falsehood will be feared as a plague-spot.

Is relapse possible into this identical sin? He knows not man's corruption, who cries, 'It cannot be.' While life remains the tempter will renew attack. He will seek again the crevice through which once he crept. He will mark the chinks which once his arrows pierced.

Time rolls on its course. Abraham deepens in the knowledge of his God. Repeated favors cheer him. In combat against mighty kings, heavenly power befriends him. He fights—they are thwarted and flee. After the victory, he is commanded to reject all fear. He hears the strength-inspiring word, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." Genesis 15:1. He is told that his ardent longings shall be gratified. Against hope an heir would be born. Isaac shall gladden his home. "In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

He witnesses, also, God's dreadful judgments on the guilty plain. He hears terrific overthrow denounced. He sees the execution. Early in the morning he revisits the place, where he had stood before the threatening Lord. "He looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the cities of the plain, and behold, and lo! the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Genesis 19:28. Thus the mercies of God's loving heart were spread before his wondering gaze. Thus, also, he saw the power of just wrath. What large experience! He will surely trust, and never fear what man can do! He will surely be impregnable to evil, and walk before God in perfect heart!

After this the Patriarch leaves Mamre and seeks Gerar. What motives prompted him, the story tells not. But he desired no settled home on earth. His eye looked far above. He lived a citizen of that "city, which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10.

Doubtless at Gerar, as in earth's every spot, ungodliness would be rife. His mind concludes, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." Genesis 20:11. Instantly his early apprehensions live again. *His faith again recedes.* Death seems again at hand, because pretty Sarah is his wife. The old temptation re-spreads its wily bait. His former disgrace fades from his view. His grievous fall haunts him no more. The keen reproach of Pharaoh is forgotten. Distrustful of His God—forgetful of the past—reckless of the future—he sins again the same foul sin. *He rushes again into the same open net!* He suppresses again the truth. He exposes Sarah again to hideous crime. He opens the door for vile deeds in Gerar's palace.

Where is his heart! where his piety! where his faith! where his love towards God! where thought for Sarah and his own soul! where his delight in holy ways! where his abhorrence of all evil! where his remembrance of Egypt—of his fall—his disgraced dismissal! Alas! his lips again deceive. He frames the subterfuge, "She is my sister." Can faith so totter! Can the most faithful of God's children so belie his high profession! What man, however deep in Christian experience, can read and tremble not!

Sarah is brought to the king's house. Abraham is acquiescing. His heart seems dead. He forgets that the season is now near when Isaac shall be born.

But God is God still. His faithfulness, and love, and truth change not. Dreams on his bed affright Abimelech. It is revealed that Sarah is already wedded. Death is denounced on him and all his house, if the stranger's wife be violated. Guilty Abraham again stands humbled before a heathen prince. How would the words of dignified reproach sound witheringly through every corner of his heart! "What is this you have done to us? What have I done to you that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? This kind of thing should not be done!" Genesis 20:9

Reader! think of Abraham so reproached—for such a sin—at such a place, and by such lips! Think, and remember self. The same snare may not endanger you. But snares to kindred offence are always near. Open falsehood may be indignantly rejected; but the occasions are many, when, by a wrongly-colored word—by an ambiguous term—by a misguiding emphasis—by a suppressed avowal, the hearer is intentionally deceived—truth is virtually denied—erroneous impressions are stealthily conveyed.

Reader! beware! The prevaricating whisper is repetition of the earliest sin. In every misleading word there is a likeness of the Devil—the liar from the beginning. The dishonest whisper may seem but a little bud; but God sees

in it full-blown iniquity. The equivocation may be half-muttered; but in His ears it has a trumpet-tongue.

Who will not pray, "Set a watch, O Lord, upon my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." Ps. 141:3. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." Ps. 19:14.

LOT

"Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

Genesis 13:12

Many heirs of glory live ingloriously. Heaven is their purchased rest, but their footsteps seem to be downward. Angels are their commissioned guards, but too often Satan leads them in his chains. The accuser gains frequent advantage. He rolls them in the mire, and can ask, "Are these the garments of God's sons?" In their hearts there is incorruptible seed, but nasty weeds are intermixed. They are translated in spirit into the kingdom of grace, but still the flesh is weak. As justified, they are complete. Their title-deeds to heaven are sure. As sanctified, they are miserable shortcomers. Their outward evidence is full of blots. The fact is patent. We see it, and we marvel not. We see it, and we mourn. But while we mourn, let us take heed. A good man's failings should, through grace, be our escape.

Such is the gloomy preface to Lot's story. If the Spirit's hand had not withdrawn the veil, and showed the secrets of the inner man, the appearances would leave us in much doubt. The visible career would startle and perplex. The

most hopeful hope would place him tremblingly in the list of saints.

But the Spirit, who by the pen of Moses, records his tottering walk, by Peter's lips announces him as "just." Thrice, in short compass, a glorious title enshrines him among the saved—2 Pet. 2:7, 8. The voice of truth proclaims him "righteous." Therefore in God's sight righteous he was.

In fallen man no righteousness can find a root, or raise its head, except when sown by sovereign grace. Grace gives the faith, which alone justifies. Grace leads the sinner to the Savior's merits. Grace hides him in the pierced side. Grace gives the hand to put on Christ's covering robe. Grace opens the lips to plead redemption's work. Grace only can unite to Christ, and only they who are ingrafted into Him—sheltered in His wounds—washed in His blood, are righteous before God. But Lot was righteous. The Spirit bears this witness. Therefore Lot was a child of grace—heir of God—joint heir with Christ.

The Spirit supplies further evidence. He tells us, that his life in the vile city was distressed. Every day he saw vile deeds, and they were vexation to him. Every day he heard vile sounds, and they were barbed arrows to his grieving heart. Evil was hateful to his renewed spirit. He breathed not freely in such atmosphere. Familiarity blunted not the piercing edge. Each hour came laden with its sorrows. He dwelt in Sodom willingly indeed, but still unhappily. The

pain was evidence of uncongenial principle. In spite of miserable frailties, Lot was a righteous man.

A rough shell may hold a pearl. There may be silver amid much dross. Life may exist within the stem, when leaves are seared and branches dry. The spring may yet be deep, while waters trickle scantily. A spark may live beneath much rubbish. Thus Lot is a Beacon, giving proof that grievous faults may co-exist with grace.

Approach the story. Lot's first days are bright with hope. He is near kinsman to Abraham. He journeys by the patriarch's side. Together they leave Ur. Together they reach Canaan. He early received knowledge of the living God. In youth he was disciplined in a godly school. A godly model was before him. Thus in life's morn he was allured to godliness.

But godly atmosphere nips not the roots of evil. The school may be most pure, but the scholar may soon go astray. The time arrives when these kinsmen must part. Their herds multiply. The same fields are narrow to pasture the united flocks.

Now a difference of character appears. Abraham shines forth unselfish— noble—generous. He yields selection of abode to Lot. He is content to take what his more selfish relative rejects. His offer is truly great. Lot's choice is narrow-minded. Hear Abraham, "Is not the whole land before you? separate yourself, I ask you, from me—if you will take the left hand, then I will go to the right—or if

you depart to the right hand, then I will go the left." Genesis 13:9. Lot surveys—calculates—resolves. "Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord or the beautiful land of Egypt. Lot chose that land for himself—the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain." Genesis 13:10-12

Lot only cares to gather this world's good. Water abounds. Herbage is fertile. The flocks will thrive. His produce will increase. Coffers will swell. He desires to be great in temporal pelf. No other thought occurs, or, if occurring, it is soon stifled.

But had these luxuriant plains no disadvantage? Who were the neighbors? What was that Sodom, beside which his tent is fixed? "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Genesis 13:13. Theirs was no common disrepute. Lot knows it, and yet he selects the neighborhood. The fields invite. He disregards prosperity of soul. The moral purity of his household is light in the balance. Spiritual welfare is ignored. The miserable choice is made. Let the soul starve, if outward plenty be secured.

Alas! in every age, at every turn, Lot meets us. Callings—professions— alliances—partners—friends—homes must

be selected. What now is the inquiry? Is the prime question, where will eternal interests receive most care? Where will godly associates surround? Where will conspicuous piety allure to heaven? Where is the Gospel honored—proclaimed—adorned? Where is Christ raised on high as All?

Ah! when will vain man be taught, that there is no profit, if the soul suffers loss? When will externals be viewed through the one medium of eternity? When will the truth be seen, that he who gains heaven gains earth besides? When will the fact be realized, that all things are the Christian's, whether "life or death, or things present, or things to come." 1 Cor. 3:22. Christ is true riches—the pearl of great price—the treasure of treasures, laid up above the injury of rust and moth—high beyond the despoiling hand of thieves. He then, who wins Christ, wins all. Happy they, who "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." Phil. 3:8. Happy they, who avoid the partnership—the profit—the connection—the rich pastures of earthly-mindedness! Happy they, who choose rather to be poor on earth, and share the thrones and crowns of heaven!

Now the scene darkens. How surely is forgetfulness of God a descent without escape! Feet cannot stand on slippery ground. Let the stone roll, it will move rapidly. Thus we soon find, that Lot is weary of tent-life in the plain. The record states, "He dwelt in Sodom." Genesis 14:12. The rural quietude is left. He seeks the city. The walls are entered. Nearest contact is desired. To the very

midst of all iniquity he moves his abode. He plants himself—his wife—his children—in the center of abominations. He levels all barriers. He courts evil's contagion. He tempts the devil to tempt them all. We can conceive no motive for thus passing the city gates, but love of pleasure—indulgence—gain.

Remember Lot's family thus fixed in Sodom, all you who deliberately place children in corrupting circles. But will he prosper? None ever truly prosper, who leave God. His presence is blessing. His blessing makes rich, and he adds no sorrow thereto. Is Lot's ease now uninterrupted? Is his comfort an unruffled stream? Soon the din of war is heard. Hostile invaders cross the borders. The men of Sodom flee defeated. The town is pillaged. All property is ransacked. The inhabitants are enchained. Lot and his family share the prisoners' doom. Their goods are seized. They are dragged forth to distant bondage. Remember Lot despoiled and captive, all you who seek joys and delights, where God is not honored. There is no peace, but in His smile. There is no safety, but beneath His sheltering wings.

But God forgets not His poor erring child. He smites, but still He loves. He prunes the tree, that it may bear more fruit. "Though he causes grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Lam. 3:32. Mercy still hovers round him. Deliverance is graciously ordained. Tidings reach Abraham of Lot's distress. He arms his numerous dependants. He pursues the victorious invaders. He entirely subdues them. He rescues Lot and his family from the captor's grasp.

Lot is now at liberty. He is free again to choose a home. Surely Sodom will be shunned. No! to that place he quickly returns. His will is to re-inhabit the accursed spot. Again he casts his anchor in the vile haven. He seeks the same neighbors. He prefers the proximity of the same iniquities. Ah! the deadening allurements of this world! How hard to dash away the cup, if once the poison has been tasted. God had most loudly warned. The warning is unheeded. Providence had frowned. The frown is slighted. Mercy had dealt lovingly. The love melts not. Weak seductions prevail. Again the hateful city is the chosen home.

And now iniquity revels unblushingly through the place. The waters rise to the brim. The cup overflows. God's patience can no more suffer. The cry ascending from this sink of evil reaches the heavens. Their conspicuous sin awakens conspicuous wrath. Vengeance waxes very hot. Tremendous overthrow must lay them low. Appalling letters must blazon the decree, "The wicked shall not go unpunished."

The last night of Sodom comes. It is indeed a night of horrors. Hell's monsters seem let loose. Can this scene be on earth? Can these vile wretches partake of humanity? Can Lot be resident among them? Yes, he is there; and God is not forgetful of him.

Angels are sent. They tell him their dreadful commission. The place is doomed to instant destruction. He is bade to

collect his sons—his daughters—his sons-in-law—and all his own, and rapidly to flee. He goes forth to warn; but his own children jeer; and then the fatal morning comes. Lot seems in no holy haste to move. It is recorded—At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out of here right now, or you will be caught in the destruction of the city." Genesis 19:15.

But still he lingers. It is added, "When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful." Genesis 19:16. But still he shrinks from fleeing to the mountain. He supplicates that he may tarry in the contiguous Zoar. Permission is obtained. "But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." Genesis 19:22. How marvelous, how condescending is the grace of God! "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not." Lam. 3:22. But still there is terrible vengeance on abominable sin. Lot is safe in Zoar. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." Genesis 19:24. "And Abraham looked toward all the country of the plain, and beheld, and lo! the smoke of the country went up, as the smoke of a furnace." Genesis 19:28.

Here let the curtain drop. No good remains to be recorded. Enough of evil has been seen. Let Lot now disappear. But let his Beacon ever warn, that weak surrender to seducing enticement is misery and shame.

Believer, in this mirror do you see any features of yourself? If so, awake, arouse. Tread down all fascinations. Reject forbidden profit. Give to the winds desire of worldly indulgence. Take up the cross. Deny yourself. Come out. Be separate. Touch not the unclean thing. Follow Christ fully. Put on the whole armor of God. Fight the good fight of faith. Act valiantly. So only you will win good trophies. So only will your crown be bright.

Many eyes are keenly watching. Many ears listen to your converse. Many sieves test your consistency. Let your sincerity be clear as the midday sun. Be thoroughgoing. Let firm 'indifference to ease' be stamped on your whole walk. Thus be a blessing to your house—your town—your country. Thus bring glory to the Lord, who *called you from the filth of earth to walk with Him in white.*

SARAH'S UNBELIEF

“Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh?"
Genesis 18:13

The scene is in the plains of Mamre. The time is when the midday heat is vehement. The patriarch, now fast descending in the valley of years, is seated in the tent-door. Doubtless his thoughts now intermix with heaven. How blessed are such seasons! The happiest hours are spent in converse with the unseen world! How bright would earth be, if the mind soared more frequently to things above! A gracious eye is watching him. A heavenly friend ponders his heart's meditations. He, who was near to Nathanael beneath the fig-tree's shade, now reads Abraham's musings. There is no solitude which God surveys not. There is no wayside prayer unheard. The songs in Philippi's jail fly upwards. The rapture in Patmos is marked. No lonely aspiration is unheeded.

Abraham lifts up his eyes. Three strangers approach. The mystic number is not without meaning. Its frequent occurrence in the sacred page has sure design. God's every arrangement is offspring of Divine intent. There is no random word, where all is spoken by celestial lips. Faith knows this well, and ever ponders—ever learns.

Hence in this selected number we see the emblem of our Triune God. Grand thought! The holy—blessed—glorious Trinity, three persons in One God, is the God of our salvation. Let us devoutly heed each symbol. Let us rejoice and reverently adore.

In this mystic band one form claims notice. The Eternal Word in human guise visits His servant. Before the time of incarnation, His delights are with the sons of men. He appears to Moses in the burning bush. He cheers Joshua as the captain of the Lord's hosts. He struggles with the wrestling Jacob. He brings tidings to Manoah and his wife. He walks with Israel's captives in the midst of the burning furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is awe-struck. He exclaims—Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt—and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Dan. 3:25. Abraham knows his visitors, and reverently bows.

Let us not advance without the true thought, that Christ abounds throughout our Bible. The Book is emphatically "the Word of Christ." His image would be more discerned, if cold unbelief weaved not so many veils. Many doubt too much. How few believe enough! Abraham with reverential joy urges the guests to tarry. As they condescend to tread this earth, so he requests that they will take food, as earthly pilgrims. Who ever prayed in vain for the Lord's presence? He stood still, when Bartimeus called. He stops now, when the patriarch invites. Reader! your heart, also, might be His perpetual seat.

With eager haste all hospitality is prepared. The welcome is not unrewarded. The former promise is renewed. The tidings—so early given, but in performance so long delayed—again delight his ears. "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and lo! Sarah your wife shall have a son." Genesis 18:10. The gracious word could not be recalled. In heaven's courts there is "no variableness, nor shadow of turning." Lapse of years may seemingly raise difficulties, but the event shall be. "Sarah your wife shall have a son."

The words reach Sarah's ears. She stood behind in the tent-door. How glad their message! "She shall have a son." How grand the far-extending blessing! "She shall be a mother of nations, kings shall come from her." Genesis 17:16. One from the courts of heaven now seals the pledge. Surely her heart will break with joy! Her happiness will surpass bounds. Her mouth will be quick to sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Luke 1:46, 47.

Alas! how different is the fact! She laughed within herself. This laugh is not the exuberant delight of Abraham, when he first heard this truth. It is the scornful sneer of unbelief. Its language says, it cannot be. It is impossible. The course of nature forbids. I am old. My husband is old. The very thought is folly.

Thus Sarah laughed. Who will not blame her, for the sin is deep? Who will not check surprise, for the sin is common?

Reader! analyze the sin, and mark its dark ingredients. All skeptic doubts are full of vain conceit. Vain man assumes more than Divine prerogative. In pride he sits as judge of what God can perform. He is bold to call God's attributes to his puny bar. He sets boundaries to superhuman power. He confines God's wisdom to the limits of his own notions. What is so silly as man's so-called reason! It is a created quality, and still it vaunts itself as higher far than the Creator. It owes its being to sovereign will, and yet it plumes itself as mightier than its originating cause. Its every power is a gift, and still it claims to be far wiser than the giver. Its faculties arise—expand—increase—decay—just as God wills; and still it struts haughtily, as if independence were its attribute.

It mainly assails the truth and power of God. Thus it showed hideous features in Moses. Though so long experienced in the school of miracles, he says, "You have said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?" Here is the sneer of unbelief! Here is a skeptic taunt! The Lord's reply shatters such silliness. "Is there any limit to my power? Now you will see whether or not my word comes true!" Numbers 11:23. Oh! that the sons of men would deeply ponder the wise sayings of the Spirit, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor, has taught Him?" Is. 40:13. "Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the

earth, faints not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." Is. 40:28.

Reader! settle in your mind the truth, that God is all-wise—all-true—almighty. The heart thus stored cannot nurse unbelief. The ground is then preoccupied. There is no place where doubt can rest. Their the only question is, "Has God spoken?" If so, the end must be according to the word. Be persuaded, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, then perplexities are gone. We may not see the time or manner of performance. Attending circumstances may be hidden, but we well know, As it is written, so it shall be.

Now, the admonition of the Lord exposes the weak ground of unbelief, "Why did Sarah laugh?" What cause can justify the jeer? When was it known that trifling sayings were uttered by me? Was any word not thoroughly fulfilled? Did any promise ever fail? Cannot every child of God testify with the dying Joshua, "Behold this day I am going the way of all the earth; and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you—all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing has failed thereof." Josh. 23:14. Let the believer bring forth the catalogue of promises. It is a sparkling chain, in which each jewel is from the treasury of heaven. It is exceeding long—what mind can count the precious links! They belong to many circumstances and many days. They pledge countless victories over many trials and many foes. But when the end arrives, the testimony is firm; not

one ever failed. All were firm as the everlasting hills. All were true as the Speaker, who is Truth.

Why then do scoffers laugh? Where is excuse for such irrational distrust? If one vessel had suffered shipwreck in this wide sea of predictions—if one voyager had failed to reach the promised haven—if one instance could be adduced, in which God spoke and accomplishment came not—if there had been one eclipse of the glorious luminary of Divine announcements—then incredulity would have a resting-place, and the laugher might reply, "For this cause do I laugh."

But no such plea was ever found. God's Word has had long trial. It has been roughly dragged before many a prejudiced tribunal. Judges have sat predetermined to condemn. Advocates have used prodigious talent to beguile. The jury have been ready to put darkness for light. But all in vain. God's every word has raised a triumphant head above submerging seas. It has stood as a rock lashed by the mighty waves of many thousand years. But the tempest's fury only consolidated. And so it ever must be. He who utters is eternal truth. Therefore fallibility can have no place. The Speaker wields the Scepter of Omnipotence. Therefore to *accomplish* is as easy as to *say*.

Why then do scoffers laugh? O my soul, stand far apart from such profanity. Clasp to your heart of hearts the comforting assurance, that nothing in all the treasury of the Word can fail. Delight in the countless promises. They

are the rich inheritance of faith. Ponder them well. They are adapted for all circumstances of prosperity or woe. They are a pillow for the aching head—a staff for the pilgrim's march—a shield against the tempter's every dart—a light in every hour of gloom. Drink deep their cordial cup, and be persuaded, God will do what God has said.

Sarah laughed. But was this sin unseen—unnoticed? It is true no human eye was resting on her. She stood in the tent-door. She faced not the heavenly visitant. His back was towards her. But from His gaze no tent could hide—no darkness screen. Every movement of her mind—every rising doubt—every ridiculing sneer was read, as are the pages of an open book.

When will the perversity of man justly weigh Omniscience? "Our secret sins are ever in the light of His countenance." Ps. 90:8. Man may dig deep, but he cannot hide. He may plan secrecy. He may weave dark veils. But there is no cover from the all-pervading eye. Darkness is light to Him, with whom we have to do. The secret chamber and the public mart are both alike.

The solemn remonstrance speaks, "Why did Sarah laugh?" and then the grand inquiry follows, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Impossibility has reference to restricted power. It touches not Omnipotence. Space is unknown to infinity. Time bounds not eternity. No strength retains almightiness.

Fear seizes Sarah, when detection came. Bold in concealment, she trembles when unveiled. Proud scoffers imagine that they are unknown. It is a fond dream. The day is near, which will reveal their every sneer. The great white throne will drag all secrets from their flimsy refuge. And then terrors will grasp them with iron grasp. They must meet Him in fear, whom they feared not to scorn.

Sarah quails and denies. Thus sin is seldom single. It is a root producing many stalks. It is a river parting into many streams. Scoffs lead to lies. But no lie can undo the deed. Truth instantly confronts her, "No, but you did laugh."

Sinner, shun each sin. Avoid its adhering stain. It is a bloodhound, which will hunt you down. Conscious that your sins are many, heinous, and of crimson dye, take each—take all in penitence and faith to the one cleansing fountain. And when you hear, "No, but you did," be ready to confess—"I did; but Jesus died." This is the only hope. At the cross is the only smile of pardon. Faith meekly pleading there obtains remission of all guilt—even the vile guilt of 'unbelieving scoffs'

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

"Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah. He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, eliminating all life—people, plants, and animals alike."

Genesis 19:24-25

Reader! you are called to a dreadful scene. Turn not away. Face it with open eye. View it solemnly with mind intent on profit. You approach not a drowning world. A blazing plain meets you. The heavens open not to pour down floods of water. Cataracts of flame descend. It was terrible, when unsparing waves destroyed. It is not less terrible, when fiery billows overwhelm.

But there is difference. A world once drowned is drowned no more. But the burning deluge comes again. What has been will be. The fearful picture of the past is fearful presage of the future. Draw near, then, seeking deep instruction. The record is an awakening admonition. Holy Spirit aid! Give edifying grace! Without Your help smiling scenes allure in vain, and terrors scare with unavailing frown.

It was a lovely scene, which charmed Lot's heart. He surveyed the watered plain of Jordan. It super-abounded with all plenteousness. Fertile pastures gave luxuriant food. Enriching streams wound their course through them. Here flocks might largely graze and calmly rest. "It was as the garden of the Lord—like the land of Egypt as you come unto Zoar." Genesis 13:10. It was rich as the richest of all lands. Earth seemed to have no kindlier spot. It smiled as the fair Eden.

Lot was not slow to choose. He took this region as his home. Is his choice wise? He looked to externals only. Outward beauties decided him. He cared not, how the natives lived. He asked not, what will be the influence of the neighboring townsmen? He considered not, that godless companions make fruitful fields no gain. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 1 Tim. 6:9.

It is sad to see Lot settling in this plain. It is sadder far to see him soon moving into Sodom. Sin's course is ever downward. The stream rushes rapidly. It is easy to be entangled in this net. It is difficult to escape.

Abundance brings short peace. Wealth invites spoilers. The sound of war is heard. His home is ransacked. His property is pillaged. He is hurried a captive to a stranger-land. He has no help in his own resources. But Abraham hears of his kinsman's ill. He pursues the foe, and brings deliverance.

Does Lot gain wisdom by calamity? Does he now flee the vile vicinity? How true it is, that no events of sorrow or of joy convert, except where sovereign grace gives blessing. How incessantly should prayer implore the guiding power of the Holy Spirit! Will Lot return to his tent life in the ungodly plains? His conduct is far worse. He is still bent on sojourning within the guilty walls.

But everlasting love still loved him. His name was in the book of life. "For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn." Romans 11:29. Therefore grace, though dim and feeble, did not utterly expire. Horrid sights meet him at every turn. Frightful sounds incessantly shock his ear. It was pain to him, but pain which he voluntarily sought. "Yes, he was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day." 2 Peter 2:8.

At last the cup of Sodom's abominations overflows. Vengeance may tarry long, but it surely falls. God's eye sleeps not. The iniquity of these cities becomes fully ripe. Wrath's sickle will do its work. A fearful night precedes destruction's day. At evening Lot is seated in the gate. Two heavenly visitants approach. Their embassy is wrath. It is the joy of angels to do heaven's behests. To scatter mercies they fly speedily. To sweep with ruin's bosom, they hesitate not. To obey God is their highest honor, whether in works of love or woe.

Lot welcomes them with reverence. He craves their presence as his guests. They yield. They accept his

dwelling as their shelter. How blessed to have angels in our homes! This is the Christian's constant privilege.

"The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them." Ps. 34:7. Unseen inhabitants throng the favored dwelling. If eyes were open, angelic forms in glorious retinue would shine as guards. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. 1:14. Higher, also, is the believer's happy state. His heart is the palace of the Triune Jehovah. Thus Jesus speaks, "If any man loves me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14:23. The Spirit testifies, "In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:22.

We are taught to pray, and therefore to expect, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." Eph. 3:17. It is the voice of our Beloved, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock— if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20.

In this dreadful night the iniquity of Sodom reaches detestable height. Annals of crime possess no parallel. Paper would almost blush to give recital. The pen shrinks from the record. The guests of Lot exhibit mighty power. They check with blindness the infuriated crowd. They bid Lot to collect his family. "Do you have any other relatives here in the city? Get them out of this place— sons-in-law,

sons, daughters, or anyone else. For we will destroy the city completely. The stench of the place has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it." Genesis 19:12-13.

It is great peril now to leave the house. But compassion excludes fear. Lot seeks the spouses of his daughters. He urgently implores them. "Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is going to destroy it." Genesis 19:14.

Grace braves all peril to save souls. They who realize salvation are untiring to extend the boon. They feel, "yet there is room." They yearn that others should rejoice in their joy, and share the safety, which is their delight. Lot seeks and warns in vain. Thus Noah seemed a fanatic to the wicked of the old world, and Lot is scorned as one that joked. Unbelief always sneers at truth. The faithful cry aloud, 'Flee from the wrath to come'. Derision answers, 'We see no sign of coming judgment. Let preachers preach, and madmen rave, who are we, that we should tremble at unrealistic alarms?'

So the night passed. The morning came. Then the angels hastened Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters which are here, lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Genesis 19:15. Woe to those who tarry recklessly on the accursed ground. If any reader be conscious of reluctance may he seek sovereign grace to slay it! From self against self may mercy rescue! It was so in Lot's case. "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him,

and they brought him forth and set him without the city." Genesis 19:16.

Lot importunes, that he may rest in Zoar, "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; oh! let me escape there, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." Genesis 19:20.

How gracious is the Lord! how piteous of human weakness! how ready to hear prayer, though intermixed with much alloy! how quick to spare at the cry of intercession! Would that God's children would give him no rest. Then how changed this earth might soon become!

The angel answered, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." Genesis 19:21-22

Lot is in Zoar. The eastern sky is bright. Light dawns as in other days. The sun arises upon earth, and gilds the city's towers—the trees—the meadows of the plain. The busy world is busy in its customary work. Men are going forth to their accustomed toil and pleasure. "They did eat—they drank—they bought—they sold—they planted—they built." Luke 17:28. But it was the last time. Ah! last times must come. Suddenly unusual signs glare in the skies. Heaven is not black with gathering clouds; but lurid with outbreaking fire. The canopy above is as a blazing furnace. Streams descend, not rain or hail, but liquid flame. Lightning succeeds lightning in incessant flashes. Boiling

brimstone falls with terrific fury. It seems as if all hell was rushing upon earth. Where can the guilty inhabitants flee? All around them is a blaze. The flame devours each mansion. Shall they rush into the plain? It is as a molten sea. Above—beneath—around—one vast conflagration crackles. A fiery tempest ravages. A fiery deluge overwhelms. There can be no escape. They, whom indomitable lust had long consumed, are now the prey of indomitable flame. Their sin had known no parallel. Now vengeance without parallel destroys.

There is no exemption. The aged and the *young*—the parent and the *child*—the learned and the ignorant—the rich and the poor—the noble and the peasant lie a charred mass. The splendid buildings and the lowly hut—the groves—the vineyards—the corn—the pasture-lands lie a blackened waste. "The next morning Abraham was up early and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the Lord's presence. He looked out across the plain to Sodom and Gomorrah and saw columns of smoke and fumes, as from a furnace, rising from the cities there." Genesis 19:27-28

Reader! Allow a warning word. Deeply ponder this appalling Beacon. The dreadful vengeance is recorded to urge vile sinners from like doom. The gracious Spirit stands pointing to these burning plains. His loving voice sounds loudly, "Escape for your life—look not behind you; neither stay in all the plain—escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." Genesis 19:17.

Hearken! He cries by Peter's voice, "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making an example unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Pet. 2:6.

"An example!" Like vengeance, then, will surely overtake impenitents. The pent-up fire will again break forth. Hearken! He speaks by Jude, "And don't forget the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with sexual immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and are a warning of the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil." Jude 1:7

Again, "an example!" The like course leads surely to like end! The voice will soon be heard, "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25:41.

Let it not be written in vain—"Behold the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." Mal.

4:1. The scene is near, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8.

May the Spirit give us grace to be ready—safe in the only ark of safety—the blessed Jesus. By faith let us flee into His wounded side. By faith let us nestle in His very heart.

Then, amid flames of a burning world, we shall be high above the reach of harm. Heavenly Father, bless these warning words!

LOT'S WIFE

"But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."

Genesis 19:26

How wondrous is God's mercy to the children of His love! It is ever tender, and it never fails. By gentle constraint angels draw Lot beyond the walls of Sodom. They set him in the plain. They urge him forward—"Escape for your life—look not behind you." Genesis 19:17. Thus mercy impels him and gives counsel.

"Look not behind you." He obeys, and safely enters into Zoar. He witnesses not the descent of wrath on the doomed plain. His feelings are not racked by contemplation of the overthrow. The writhing misery is behind him. But in Zoar he looks around. He sees not his wife. He tarries, but she comes not. He searches, and what meets his eye? A pillar stands where she had halted. Her figure is transformed to salt!

Do we inquire the cause of this woe? The faithful monitor replies, "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Why did she hesitate? The act was grievous sin, because the precept was precise. "Look not behind

you." What excited to this faltering? *The reverting eye betrays the heart. Affections were yet in Sodom.* The pleasures of the godless city had been, alas! too dear. Circumstances had compelled departure. But fond feelings were not yet uprooted. She casts a wistful glance to her bewitching home. She turns to the scenes which had so often charmed. She sighs over the spot of many a seducing joy. Ah! guilty look! It proved inward unsoundness. It gave evidence of reluctant flight. The separation is in person, not in will. She is but partially estranged. Sodom is left, but Zoar is not reached. There is an intervening plain, and in that plain she perishes. A few more steps of self-denial might have conveyed to safety. A few more persevering moments might have brought deliverance. But she pauses, and dies miserably.

This frightful scene thus glares for special admonition. Until the Lord comes, the record lives. While need shall be, it loudly teaches. The lips of Jesus especially enforce the lesson—"Remember Lot's wife." Luke 17:32. Let her image ever stand before you. Let her sad story be engraved on memory's tablet. View it, and learn. Ponder it, and beware. Heed it, and be wise.

But for whom is this Beacon raised? Who are in peril of sinning as she sinned, and falling as she fell? Not they, who are fast bound in chains of ignorance. Not they, whose life is unresisted sin. Not they, who are blind captives in the devil's cell. Not they, who are strangers to the stings of an upbraiding conscience. Not they, who have never trembled lest perdition should be their endless

doom. Not they, who have had no glimpse of heaven's glories. Not they, who have never gazed on Jesus' beauty. Not they, who are wholly indifferent to His dying love—His cleansing blood—His all-atoning offerings—His reconciling sacrifice—His curse-removing agonies—His law-fulfilling life—His rising power—His interceding work. No. The warning is to those within whose hearts some rousing work has stirred—who have been shaken from the sleep of death—who have burst many a detaining fetter— whose conscience has been pierced—who have heard the voice, "Escape for your life—look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain—escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." "Turn! turn! for why will you die." Ezek. 33:11. "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Eph. 5:14.

The class is large who thus start for heaven. Some efforts are vigorously made. The city of destruction is left. Some rapid steps commence flight. For a brief time all seems fine. But the march is long. A dreary wilderness must be traversed. Hardness must be endured. Temptations must be trampled down. A fight must be fought. The hand must ever hold the sword. The shield of faith must never be allowed to fall. There is much danger, lest they loiter—be disheartened and look back. To such professors the warning cries, "Remember Lot's wife."

To such, for a while, all may have a hopeful look. But good beginnings secure not happy ends. The morn dawns brightly. The rising beams foreshow a beautiful day. But sudden clouds appear. The skies is dark. The sun descends

mantled in gloom and storm. The vernal branches gladden the eye with countless buds. What promise of rich fruit! A night of blight follows. The blossoms fall, and leave a barren stem.

A gallant ship glides gaily from the port. It proudly breasts the waves. Pleased expectation paints a joyous voyage and happy entrance to the distant haven. But a sunken rock is struck, or a fierce hurricane assails, or a leak opens and expands. The vessel sinks, and few survive to tell the woeful tale. How often is healthy childhood marred by the touch of malady! How often is robust youth beguiled by sin into decrepit age. Thus vivid illustrations impress the truth, "One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off." 1 Kings 20:11

It is not easy to hold a long rope straight. Feet often slip, if the ascent be tediously steep. Thus many falter in the heavenward course. "Remember Lot's wife."

Is it asked, how can such regression be? Let obvious instances reply. One for a while burns with devotedness to Christ. No hindrances deter. But a pause comes. He slackens in his speed. He stops and looks back. What ails him? He has received the truth amid choking thorns. They spring up with ruinous vitality. The love of the world revives. Its show—its vanity—its delights regain their seat. The thought intrudes, "How happy were those early days." "How sweet the goblet of those laughing hours!"

Thus to Israel's children the luxurious fare of Egypt reappeared. They thought of the past, and longed—Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the ISRAELITES began to crave the good things of Egypt, and the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed. "We remember all the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic that we wanted." Numbers 11:4-5. The manna from heaven was despised. The dainties, though eaten in slaves' chains, excited regret. The love of worldly things regained ascendancy. They looked back.

Let the sad case of DEMAS next be viewed. He stood a foremost champion in the cause of Christ. He braved all peril. Paul's chain deterred him not. He was not ashamed of the noble prisoner. The apostle, writing from his cell, claimed him as a fellow-laborer—Philemon 24. Surely his heart is garrisoned by grace! Surely he will be faithful unto death! Surely by the glories of the cross, the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world! A few years pass. The undaunted Paul is again a prisoner at Rome. Is Demas still beside him? Does he still share the peril and the shame? The witness is—"Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. The baubles of the world, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," presented their seductive charms. Paltry desires still smoldered in his heart. A breath of temptation rekindled the base flame. He looked back, and left the company of Paul. Unhappy man! The sequel is not known. It may be, that bitter tears bewailed his wretched fall; and

agonies of penitence sought pardon. This the eternal world will tell. We only know his affections were bewitched, and he went back.

Sometimes timidities arise. A foul brood of doubts—distrusts—dismays—flap trembling wings. The path, at first so pleasant, is infested by lions. Doubtless the prize is precious. But the conflict demands much cost. Nerves must be strained. No respite can be given. Unflinching continuance must be braved. A few steps are made in glad alacrity—their endurance becomes hard. There is the fatal pause. There is the dastard look behind. "Remember Lot's wife."

ORPAH and Ruth showed much attachment to the widowed Naomi. They both arise to flee from Moab. But the way was long. Hardships were before them in the land of Judah. Naomi warns them of the risk. "Go return each to her mother's house." "Return, my daughters." They both were melted into tears. They both glowed with affection. But one was firm. The other trembled. The journey—the distance—the doubtful home darkened the scene. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth, cleaved unto her."

PETER saw Jesus. He desired to be with Him. He boldly left the ship to tread the sea. He viewed the raging billows. He marked the howling wind. He trembled. He looked away, and he began to sink. Thus doubts and fears often check the onward course. "Remember Lot's wife."

Sometimes the early steps of YOUTH seem heavenward. The world allures not. Godly friends are loved. Godly work delights. But soon a change occurs. The world, which once was as a faded flower, now presents fragrance. But whence this decline of godliness? The pious parent is removed. The faithful pastor's ministry is ended. The friendly monitor is no longer near. Thus "Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him." 2 Kings 12:2.

Sometimes ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCE is shipwreck to the soul. When state is humble, and means are contracted, the spirit is lowly, and God has unrivaled sway. But if prosperity applies its testing wand—if riches smile where poverty once frowned—then it appears that outward condition is not real grace. Israel's hard days were Israel's best days. How tender is the admonition, "Thus says the Lord, I remember the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness in a land not sown!" Jer. 2:2. There is a striking word in the records of Jehoshaphat. "He walked in the first ways of his father David." 2 Chron, 17:3. Royal advance was no real gain to David. It brought declension. The lowly shepherd felt more of heaven than the king. He walked more closely with his God in the green meadows, than in the gilded palace.

Let then this picture of Lot's wife give caution. But let it not discourage. *If grace be real, it may have many falls; but it will rise to fight more vigorously, and to gain final triumph.* He who begins the good work will perform it to

the day of Christ—Phil. 1:6. Water from lofty source will rise to lofty height. Fire will live beneath much rubbish. The true child of God will continue in the faith grounded and settled, and will not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Behold the veteran PAUL. He appears bearing the scars of many a conflict—battered by many a blow—wearied by a lifelong race. He reviews the past. The scene is trial—strife—fierce warfare. But he survives to bless God, and to adore sustaining grace. "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. 15:10. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return." 2 Tim. 4:7-8

But perhaps some reader sighs—I am as the wife of Lot. Once I ran well—but I have looked back. Old pleasures tempted. I have yielded. Can there be hope for one so vile? Yes. Hope cannot die while Jesus lives. You may have sinned thus grievously—but you are not transfixed a monument of relentless wrath. You yet live. You stand on praying ground. Space is yet granted. The throne of grace is yet before you. Abundant promises in rich profusion call. "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you. Return, backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." Jer. 3:14, 22. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. Say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Hos 14:2. Plead the precious blood, whose virtue never dies. It can wash out

your crimson dye. Fly to the cross. You cannot perish beneath its screening shade. In Jesus' name wrestle with the God of all grace. Restoring grace will help you. The quenched Spirit will burn again within you. You will run your remaining race, "looking unto Jesus." The sight of Him will pale all other luster. The eye which sees Him is blind to sublunary tinsel.

ISHMAEL MOCKING

"Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking."

Genesis 21:9

The believer's present heritage is vast and rich. But it is not pure sunshine. He basks indeed beneath the cheering smiles of heaven. But earth eyes him with malignity. As "the friendship of the world is enmity with God." James 4:4; so, God's favor brings the world's hate.

Scripture hides not the fact. They who leave all for Christ, receive an hundred-fold now in this time, with persecutions, "and in the world to come eternal life." Mark 10:30. The warning is clear, "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." John 15:19. Blessings from God, and malevolence from man go hand in hand. The blessed must suffer; but they rejoice in suffering and win a crown. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were

before you." Matthew 5:10-12. This is exemplified in Scripture-story. It has been seen in Cain. It meets us now in Ishmael.

To introduce Ishmael, we must return to Abraham. It is joy and gain to do so. The patriarch's portrait is largely drawn by the Spirit's pencil. It is, therefore, a most precious study. Here, as in a mirror, the *weakness* and the *power* of faith are shown. Sometimes this grace appears as a flickering flame. Sometimes it sinks very low, and seems almost extinct. Then it springs up in giant-strength—brilliant as the noon-day sun. Sometimes it trembles as a reed. Then it defies impossibilities. But being born of God, it never dies. It is divine, and therefore immortal.

Abraham leaves his Chaldean home, armed with a noble promise—cheered by transcendent prospect—"I will make of you a great nation." Genesis 12:2. Strong in this hope, "he went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan he came." Genesis 12:5. But Sarah gives him no heir. Time rolls on. Year follows year; and he continues childless. The promise tarries; but again and again it glitters in his sight. When he bewails his vacant home, the Lord brings him beneath the starry canopy, and says, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that— too many to count!" Genesis 15:5. Still fulfillment lingers—no son is born. Faith hangs a weary head. It wavers, and adopts a godless project to attain the end. But human policies help not God's decree. No might can frustrate; no scheming can accelerate His time.

Sarah, to secure offspring, resigns her wedded place to the Egyptian handmaid. The scheme succeeds. The patriarch is a parent. Long space now intervenes. For about fifteen years young Ishmael thrives, the hope and stay of Abraham's house. And now renewed promises delight him. It is announced that aged Sarah shall herself be mother of the heir. Holy joy transports him. But still he clings to Ishmael. "Oh! that Ishmael might live before you!" Genesis 17:18. The prayer for Ishmael is largely answered. But the heirdom shall not be his. Sarah indeed shall bear a son; and with her Isaac the covenant shall be confirmed. God spoke. Who can withstand! The event seemed impossible. Nature's course prohibited. But what can stop Omnipotence! The centenarian Abraham embraces Isaac. The tent of Sarah cradles her offspring. What joy would now pervade the family! Faith would expand by seeing that God's word must stand. But soon this joy is clouded. While Isaac's years are tender, Sarah has proof of bitter hate in Ishmael. The story simply states— "She saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking." Genesis 21:9.

After long years, the Spirit elucidates that term. He shows that malice soured the heart, and that derisive scorn polluted the first-born's breast. "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Gal.

4:29. Strong feelings agitate the anxious mother. She cries, "Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with

Isaac." Genesis 21:10. The fond father hesitates. He has parental love for Ishmael. He would retain him by his side. But God interposes, "In all that Sarah has said unto you, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall your seed be called." verse 12. He obeys. Hagar and the youth are banished. They wander forth into the wilderness. Isaac remains the joy of the house—the heir of the promise—the fountain whence the true Church flows—the progenitor of Him in whom all blessings dwell.

Such is the narrative—attractive in its pure simplicity—abundant in its holy lessons. From every incident a voice strongly cries, 'Act faith in our wonderworking God. Nothing is too large for His love. Nothing is too hard for His power.'

But there is far more than instructive precept here. There is a blaze of spiritual light. The Spirit, by Paul's pen, lifts up a flaming torch, and casts back rays on this early record. Thus illumined, each point jumps forth resplendent in Gospel truth. The facts remain in all their verity; but each fact becomes a mirror of salvation's scheme.

We here see how wondrous is the Word which chronicles God's wondrous dealing. Behold the annals of one family. They are a world-long story. They image the doings of succeeding ages. They are a seed prolific of vast harvest, while earth remains.

Return to Abraham's house. There are two women—Sarah and Hagar—one is free—the mother of free offspring. The

other is a bond-maid—the parent of slaves. But, in these women the Spirit shows the TWO COVENANTS of God with man. The one is the covenant of grace, confirmed and ratified in Christ, which calls to Gospel liberty and life. The other is the covenant of works, which dooms to galling slavery and death.

In the sons we have the diverse seeds which separate mankind. Isaac images the heaven-born family—the sons of grace—the heirs of eternal righteousness in Christ. Ishmael is dark as the type of that sad progeny, the sons of nature, whose only hope centers in self and self's performances. The parallel exhibits the black features of poor nature's seed. They hate the light, and would extinguish it. They persecute the lowly followers of the Lamb, and sincerely would chase them from the earth. The sequel, also, is here foreshown. The slaves of the law are driven away—most wretched outcasts. The Gospel freedmen receive the inheritance of life.

Such is the story in its allegorical intent. Each point claims closer notice. Holy Spirit! draw back the veil! Conduct each reader into the inner sanctuary of Christ's truth! HAGAR represents the dispensation of the LAW. Originally this law is written by God's finger in the heart. On SINAI it is proclaimed anew amid tremendous portents of majesty and awe—in the terrors of thunders—lightnings—and the trumpet's clang. It reveals Jehovah as all glorious in holiness, demanding spotless righteousness from all the sons of men. It is simple, brief, and clear as the light of heaven. It exacts love—perfect and unsullied,

without one deviating step. Its edicts stretch from earliest to last breath. It asks obedience in every movement of the mind—in every station, circumstance, and age. Compliance is eternal life. Infringement is inevitable death. It holds a relentless scepter. It exacts life-long and undeviating service.

But it gives no help. Its subjects are weak in nature's weakness—and fettered in the chains of nature's corruptions. It extends no hand to strengthen. It sternly cries, "Do this, or die." It never melts in pity. The voice of pardon is not heard within its realms. It knows no sounds of peace or comfort. Repentance is ignored. The weeping eye—the smitten breast—vows of amended walk, are inexorably repelled. The Law sits unbending on an iron throne. Its slaves are lashed to work. Failure dooms to hopeless misery. Such is the covenant exemplified in Hagar. It is holy and most gloriously righteous. But it frowns terribly on fallen man.

In contrast SARAH shines brightly. She comes forth the emblem of the covenant of GRACE. When midnight darkness seems to cover earth, free favor rises as the morning star. Let thanks be heard. Let praises swell. Let loud thanksgivings fill the courts of heaven. Let grateful hearts pour forth adoring hallelujahs. Grace comes. Man is not left to hopeless bondage under Sinai's law. Another compact is made in heaven. Of this Christ is the sum—the substance—the glorious whole. He undertakes to be its surety. All that the Sinaitic Covenant demands, He will perform. All the dread penalties, so justly claimed, He will

undergo. All on whom His Father's love shines savingly, He receives as members of Himself. They are contained in Him. He is the Head— they are the body. For them He lives. For them He is obedient. For them He dies. He *represents* them in His life—His death—His rising from the grave— His session at God's right hand. Glorious Covenant! Worthy of the Father, who decrees! Worthy of the Son, who undertakes! Worthy of the Spirit, who applies! Throughout grace reigns!

It is a covenant of liberty—of joy—of peace—of hope—of holiness. All, who by faith embrace it, are free to all extent of freedom—free from the terrors of the curse—the dread of hell—the frown of God. They rejoice as heirs of heaven and endless bliss. They float on the waves of an ocean of peace—peace, with God reconciled—peace, with conscience lulled. They glory in hope of the glory of God. By the Spirit's mighty power and indwelling strength, they adorn the Gospel by most holy living. They blossom and bear precious fruit. Trees of righteousness—planted by the Lord—tended by his constant care.

Hagar in nature's strength bears Ishmael. There is no marvel. There is no deviation from accustomed course. Sarah, against all hope, by virtue of God's promise, by intervening wonder, gives birth to Isaac.

Such are the two divisions of mankind. One race is wholly Natural—born after nature's mode. They live as men according to the flesh. Their thoughts— their feelings— their desires—their hopes, look not beyond this world's

horizon. They rise not above its low level. Under the covenant of works they live—they die—they meet the judgment-seat.

The other race is wholly SPIRITUAL. They are the sons of God's eternal promise. They are born indeed in nature's wilderness, and in the prison-house of the law. But the Spirit in due time marvelously visits them. He gives them a new nature—new desires—new hopes—new powers—new prospects. By His own power He opens their eyes to see their natural condition—their ruin under the Law—the beauty of Christ's finished work—their full deliverance in Him. He imparts faith to flee to Him—to cleave to Him—to love Him—to serve Him. They are no more carnal, "but spiritual." They come out from the world and are separate. To God they live. To God they die. Such are the two seeds. Ishmael and Isaac are their types.

Of old it was declared, that ENMITY was put between them. So it ever has been. So it ever will be. Ishmael soon showed malicious hate of his young brother. His race still lives and hates. The annals of the Church are stained with persecution in each page. If power equaled the will, the godly would long since have been extinct, and Christian truth been cast into outer darkness. Let holy prophets give their witness. What was their crime? They told of God—His will—His truth. They warned of evil. They counseled to reform. Therefore hatred assailed them, cruelty tormented them, and they were hunted, as foes of man, from earth. Let martyrs in noble army move forward. They appear galled with irons—lashed with scourges—branded

with every indignity—perishing amid all torments—victims of savage cruelties. But what was their guilt? They firmly maintained the truth of Christ. They resolutely scorned to bow to idols. They dared to shout amid the flames, "None but Jesus." On the rack they gloried in Christ's cross. Therefore the Ishmaels persecuted.

Let Jesus Himself be seen. He walks this earth the incarnate God. Perfect love dwelt on His lips, and moved in His every step. What is His welcome? Let the judgment-hall—let Calvary reply. Ah! sin of sins! Enmity could not evince more spite. Malice could not inflict more torturing pains. Abhorrence could not invent more ignominious death. The apostles follow. The enmity is not less keen. The sure word still finds fulfillment, "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12. Restrictions may repress overt acts. But the same spirit lives. The inner feeling in every Ishmael's breast is enmity. The dragon chained is still a dragon. Satan, released from his millennial chain, shall not be softened. 'Holy Father, hasten the time when they shall not hurt nor destroy in all your holy mountain! When your sons shall wear one garb—use one tongue—breathe one climate of love! Hear our cry. Your Name is Love.'

ISHMAEL CAST OUT

But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

Genesis 21:9-10

Sinners may revel, but their day is very brief. Thorns crackle with high blaze, and quickly subside in ashes. The godless laughter is the prelude of long wailing. The morn soon fades—the evening shadows fall—the night comes on apace—the night which knows no dawn. The Spirit sounds the knell of short-lived evil—"Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be—yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." Ps. 37:10.

Thus Ishmael's malicious sport soon ends. Sarah's watchful eye detects. The persecutor may not tarry. The sneer—the taunt—the petty tyranny must cease. Isaac shall no more dread the banter or the blow. The teasings, which were pain to the meek child, shall no more trouble. The mother demands immediate expulsion, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son." The patriarch hears God's

confirming voice. He instantly complies. The young oppressor is driven far away.

Thus speaks the narrative. It is an outer bark—when it peels off, the rings of inner meaning are discerned. These rings are many. Each is a wealth of thought. But the intermediate fulfillments of the type are but as lesser lights before a final blaze. Through, then, the long perspective, let us at once approach the close. Let the eye rest alone on the ultimate conclusion. The consummation is an eternal gulf between the children of the covenant of works and heirs of grace. This consummation comes—it surely comes—it quickly comes. Angels are ready to sound the final blast. Listening ears are waiting for the trumpet's clang. At any moment it may shake the universe. Then all, who have breathed life's breath, must take their place. Each must hear, "Come," or "Depart." Each must have a blessed welcome or be cast out.

Reader! be wise. Anticipate the dread result. Live, as did Jerome, with this trumpet's echo always in your ears. In envisioning thought, then, let the white throne be set—let the all-righteous Judge be seated—let the recording books be opened—let all, who ever lived, stand at the bar—let him who writes—let all who lead, face the account, and meet the last day's scene.

Now sovereign Justice reins. Truth spreads revealing light. All masks now fall. Deception vanishes. Hypocrisy can no more deceive. The worse can no more seem the better cause.

The sons of the Sinaitic code expect eternal life. On what plea? They have no plea but their own merits—their fulfillment of the law's demands. But the record of their days is continuous sin. Are these doings a portion of obedience? What are these passions—lusts—rebellious acts? What is the evil, which has soiled each hour, and stained each thought, and stamped transgression on the whole life's course! Guilt cannot be denied. Excuse there can be none. The law's reward has not been earned—what is the inevitable outcome? The curse must fall. Justice condemns. There is vast debt. No payment can be made. Then what can stop the sentence, "Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." Matt. 22:12-13.

The executioners are ready. The cell is prepared. The chains are forged. The jailer receives his convicted prisoners. Transgressors are cast out. This is faint outline of the end. Scripture portrays it in these dreadful colors, that men may ponder and take heed. Reader! you can never say that clearest warning is not given.

CAST OUT FROM WHAT? There is now a long farewell to earth, and all that earth contains. Through life's short day unnumbered mercies strewed each path. The sun shone sweetly. The fanning breezes wafted delight. The groves re-echoed with the warbler's melody. The verdant meadows spread their soft carpet. Flowers charmed with fragrance. Fruits regaled with varied lusciousness. The

outcasts no more taste these pleasures. The cup has fallen from their hand. Earth is forever gone.

There was much happiness in communion with fellow-man. The lively talk—the mirth of social hours—the friendly interchange of thought enchanted the vacant time. No friend will now be seen. The last smile has been smiled. The last enlivening word has died away.

Ordinances of religion brought some tranquil hours, although no saving profit. These privileges come no more. No chimes invite to worship. No sacred Scriptures tell of God's gracious will. No preacher proclaims Christ. No pulpit declares His dying love—His precious blood—His rising power—His willingness to save—His promise to receive all seekers of His grace. The Gospel's last note has sunk in silence. No returning Sabbaths bring repose. No sacred song gives solace. "Come to me" will never more be heard.

O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out.

Hope, also, at last is fled. It often came and whispered soothing things. It showed a glimmering prospect of penitence—amendment—pardon. It flattered, 'all may yet be well.' Where is hope now? It vanished with the yell, "Too late—too late!" It is transformed into despair.

Need I say, there is the absence of those lovely sights which cheer the mansions of the saved. No angels spread their sparkling wings around. No white-robed multitudes

glitter with their crowns. No Christ is seen. No God reveals His glory. There is "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." 2 Thess. 1:9.

O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out.

All this is doleful gloom. But this is only negative. Absence of joy may not be agonizing pain. But a dreadful veil must be drawn back. Scripture sounds a more frightful note. It speaks in tender compassion—to warn, that we may flee—to urge, that we may escape the wrath to come. Reader! look yet again, and may the look be your salvation.

Is darkness dismal—cheerless—disconsolate—a fit emblem of ignorance, misery, and filth? Over these realms an impenetrable pall of blackness, of darkness forever hangs. The darkness is so black, that blackness cannot be blacker.

Is weeping a sign of wretchedness and woe? Here is weeping never ceasing to shed tears. Is wailing the bitter utterance of irrepressible distress? Here wailing is an ever-echoing wail. Does gnashing of teeth betray the upbraidings of remorse? Is it the sign of self-hating reproach? Here gnashing of teeth is unremitting. Is there keen torture in the worm, that ever gnaws and never leaves its prey? Here the worm dies not. Does fire indicate extremest agony? is it pain in most excruciating form? This fire is never quenched. The lost writhe terribly on

beds of flame. They float in lakes of fire. Do they crave one drop of water to cool tongues parched in agony? It may not be. A portion is presented to them—who can read and tremble not! "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb." Rev. 14:10.

What must that misery be, which the omnipotence of God puts forth all its might to intensify! No thought can imagine. No tongue can utter. But such the misery which groans in these dreadful dwellings. It is an dreadful word, "He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Rev. 19:15. If this were solitary anguish, it still would be anguish in the extreme. But the misery is multiplied by the wide fellowship of partners. On all sides there is companionship of woe. The eye can only rest on others in like torments. The ear can only hear the wails of fellow-sufferers.

Shall it be said that these descriptions are shadowed out in figurative terms? Let it be granted. But what is gained by such concession? The Spirit cannot exaggerate or overpaint. The reality will not be fainter than the picture scene. No, rather language fails to show the total truth. No painting can depict the fire's touch, or show the serpent's deadly sting, or indicate the lion's rage. So no word-painting can fully show the misery of the lost. O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out!

But pains may patiently be born if reprieve gilds the horizon, or ease be seen in the distance. But there the tide ever flows at fullest height, and cessation never comes. Millions of years bring no end nearer, and millions succeeding millions is but commencement of interminable woe. There is one constant present, and that present is overflowing cup of torment. O my soul, see to it, that you are not cast out!

But when Ishmael is cast, out, the true heir remains. To this woe there is bright contrast. Look to the right hand of the Judge. The sheep of His pasture are there folded. The children of the covenant of grace await the outcome. Their cruel adversary exhibits all their sins. He establishes their guilt. He demands their full punishment. They deny no charge. But they present a plea for acceptance. It is simple, but unanswerable. Their plea is Christ. Their lives show that by the Spirit's power faith became the inhabitant of their hearts. This faith united them to Christ. It made them very members of Him their glorious Head. Thus, all His sufferings were their sufferings. All His work was their work. In Him they died. In Him they paid the law's extremest penalty. In Him they wrought out complete obedience. None can lay anything to their charge. Christ's death is full acquittal. Christ's life is a spotless robe concealing every sin. They ask no mitigation of the law's just claims. But they ask life and heaven on the sure grounds that Jesus is the law-fulfiller. They prevail. "God is just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." Rom.

3:26. They have full right to all which Jesus earned and purchased. They receive it. The accuser is silenced. They hear the welcome, "Come you blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25:34. Theirs are the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Pet. 3:13.

Reader! in thought behold them in their blest abode. Holy Spirit! in tender love illumine the picture which Your Word presents! The realms are bright in one expanse of light. Are the sun's rays lovely? But these rays are darkness to this light. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. 21:23. On earth their eyes were oftentimes charmed with scenes of beauty. But what is the best beauty of a sin-soiled world compared to the charms which now invest their homes! *How glorious are the abodes which infinite love and power have prepared!* "I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2.

To believers earth is the home of many griefs. The body often droops in languor. Racking pains harass the frame. Hunger and thirst afflict. Tears furrow the cheek. Sighs cause the breast to heave. But the whole mass of sorrow is now abolished. They hunger no more. They thirst no more. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Is. 33:24. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain—for the former things are passed

away." Rev. 21:4. O my soul, see to it, that you inherit the kingdom.

On earth, temptation makes days bitter. There are constant groans from "the body of this death." "The law of the members wars against the law of the mind." "The flesh lusts against the spirit." Inbred corruptions soil every act, and banish peace and awaken self-aborrence. Now there is freedom from all the presence—all the touch—and all the sense of evil. The Spirit can never be more vexed. Ingratitude and unbelief are totally extinct. The redeemed are as holy as God is holy. They are as pure as Jesus is pure. They are as far from sin as heaven is from hell.

The travelers along the narrow way are often desolate. Their friends are few. They rarely enjoy holy fellowship. Their dwellings are in loneliness. But now what multitudes surround them! All rejoicing in the same joy—all clothed in the same robes—all singing the same song—all breathing the same love—all washed in the same blood—all ascribing their full salvation to God and to the Lamb. Blessed company! They sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, apostles, evangelists, and the noble army of martyrs, and the valiant body of reformers, and all who ever loved, and served, and gloried in the blessed Jesus! O my soul, see to it, that you inherit the kingdom!

The greatest solace in life is the felt presence of Jesus. It is the joy of joys to hear His voice in the Word, and to catch a glimpse of His smile. But mists intervene. The bride

seeks Him, but she finds Him not. In heaven there never can be separation. Eternity is uninterrupted access to Him. There is no eclipse to the sight of the King in His beauty. The redeemed follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They walk with Him in white. They eat and drink at His table in His kingdom. They are forever with the Lord. The *thought* is too much for earth. What must the *consummation* be!

O my soul, see to it, that you inherit the kingdom.

ESAU

"Esau despised his birthright."
Genesis 25:34

Read the annals of the world. They exhibit sinful parents and their sinful sons. Read the annals of God's chosen seed. It is not an unblemished page. The graceless sit in families of grace. Faith flows not in the stream of human blood. The saints are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13.

Behold the family of Isaac. The members are few. Twin sons share their parent's love. We cannot doubt, that childhood's culture was the same to both. Each would be similarly taught the fear and love of God. But one was a child of darkness—one of light. The Spirit sounds a clear note, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? says the Lord—yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." Mal. 1:2, 3.

Early they show most diverse tastes. Esau's delight was in the fields. Robust exercise was his delight. It was his joy to climb the mountain and to scour the plain. His venison fed Isaac with dainty fare. The quiet Jacob cared not to leave the tents. Near to his home he watched the flocks. He lived beneath the mother's eye, and thus secured the

mother's heart. She, also, would often ponder the divine announcement, "The elder shall serve the younger." Genesis 25:23. She would anticipate her beloved's sure pre-eminence. Such the domestic picture of the patriarch's home.

A memorable day arrives. Jacob had gathered some red beans, and had boiled them into porridge. Esau suddenly appears, faint from the chase, and ravenous for food. The lentils are prepared. His appetite is keen. Desire is strong. His strength is exhausted. Rapidly—impatiently—voraciously he cries, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew you've made." verse 30. Jacob's besetting sin quickly appears. He presents no generous gift. He shows no readiness to renovate his worn-out brother. His thought is wholly selfish. He keenly marks his opportunity. He coldly trades with his advantage. He makes unnatural merchandise of his red stew. He knows the birthright is with the elder. But now he can tempt the elder to surrender it. His lips frame the base proposal, "Sell me this day your birthright." verse 31.

The weary Esau took counsel only of weak flesh. He felt his strength was quivering in life's socket. "Behold I am at the point to die." Without this food I must expire. The birthright cannot extend my days. I speedily go hence, "and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" verse 32. The calculating Jacob urges his famished brother. The barter must have the ratification of oath. "Swear to me this day." Hesitation ceases. Appetite prevails. "He swore unto him—and he sold his birthright unto Jacob." verse 33.

The base bargain is complete. Jacob gives payment of his bread and stew. The profane Esau greedily devours. He gives no sign of penitence or shame. He shows no grief for his degraded state. He mourns not his primogeniture thus lost. He is as lighthearted as before. "He did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way." verse 34. He bears, indeed, another name to mark the transaction. "Therefore was his name called Edom." verse 30. "Thus Esau despised his birthright." verse 34.

What is *God's verdict* of this deed? The Holy Spirit is not silent. He brands it as "godless." It bears forever the stigma of impious disdain of sacred privilege. It is black with the guilt of trampling holy things beneath the foot of scorn. "Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau. He traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal." Hebrews 12:16

What were these rights of the first-born? Scripture gives clear intimations. There was temporal pre-eminence. He was endowed with a double portion of territorial possession. There were, moreover, spiritual privileges. In patriarchal family the firstborn had distinguished dignity. He was revered as ruler in the house. To him belonged the teacher's chair. And until Divine appointment limited the priestly office to the line of Aaron, he discharged the holy functions of religion. These rights were heaven's own grant, and therefore to be highly prized. Rashly to relinquish them was to disdain the ordinance of God. It was profane to think lightly of all-wise decree.

But in the family of Abraham the birthright granted much more. The wondrous promise of Canaan was linked to it. The firstborn was the heir of this domain. The spiritual import of this land was seen by faith. "All these faithful ones died without receiving what God had promised them, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth. And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them." Hebrews 11:13-14, 16. Thus to despise the birthright involved contempt of the celestial kingdom.

There was more than this. "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. The great Redeemer shall be Abraham's lineal offspring. When the grand Deliverer shall arise to roll back the curse—to cancel sin—to give adoption to God's family—to perfect salvation, He shall be Abraham's heir. Oh! wondrous privilege! Oh! transcendent pre-eminence! To be progenitor of a long line of mighty monarchs is an empty bubble compared to such glory. To sell the birthright is to barter more than angelic honor!

Thus Esau was godless. We read—we marvel—we pity—we condemn. We reason, surely never was folly like this folly! This sin surpasses sin! But, Reader! perhaps you are

this man. The race of Esau yet lives, and will live, until the Lord returns. Do not multitudes profanely scorn the glorious privileges and prospects of Christ's Gospel? He calls by the ministry. He invites in the Word. They care not to hear. He sends repeated messages to tell of the rich inheritance. "They despise the pleasant land. They believe not his word." Ps. 106:24. Ambassadors cry aloud. "We beseech you in Christ's stead." They respond, No, no, we rather choose earth's emptiest pottage. Ah! fools! Ah! worse than fools!

If any Esau should read this page, may the Beacon touch his besotted heart! May the good Spirit open his eyes to see the riches of the glory which is thus scorned! It is a noble prayer, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him—the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Eph. 1:17, 18. Let us not cease to press the petition until the answer fully come. The prospect is a boundless ocean of supremest joys. The eye is dazzled. No tongue of men or angels can tell the half. The believer feels, but his full heart cannot give utterance.

Among these treasures, the most sparkling gem is total obliteration of all sin. Who can tell the ecstatic rapture to an accusing mind to know that the blood of the Cross thoroughly wipes out every stain! Who can depict the relief to a burdened conscience, when the assurance comes, that the all-searching eye no more discerns a speck

of guilt! Ten thousand worlds are dust, compared to the faithful saying, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow— though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1:18; and again, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. 31:34.

In the catalogue other blessings without number shine. There is refuge from the law's tremendous curse. This curse is rightly due to every breach of the pure code of love. But it is all expended on the surety-head of Jesus. The avenging sword is buried in His breast. Heaven is now thrown open, and it is a blaze of love. There is the joy of reconciliation—the serene delight of looking up to God, as a Father arrayed in loving smiles. There is adoption into His family. There is no more distance or estrangement, but heirdom of heaven— joint-heirdom with Christ.

To believers the pledge is given, "All things are yours— things present and things to come." Life is yours, that you may receive grace. Death is yours, that you may be crowned with glory. Providences are yours, that all things may work together for your good. Angels are yours, to encamp around your path, and to render unseen, but not less certain, ministry. A throne of grace is yours, that you may boldly tell out all your fears, and all your need, and find supplies of mercy and support. The glorious Word is yours, to teach—to warn—to comfort. All the precious promises are yours—at every moment inviting you to the brightest of bright prospects. God's righteousness is yours, to cover all your defilement. It is so pure, that

Omniscience can discern no flaw. It is so worthy, that God throughout eternity cannot sufficiently reward. The Holy Spirit is yours, to open your eyes to your own deformity—to reveal the full glories of the great Redeemer—to unstop your ears to hear His wooing voice—to expand your heart to receive Him in all His fullness—to quicken you to serve Him with all your powers—to strengthen you to resist temptation's wiles—and to love holiness with all your soul and might. What can a sinner need, which shines not in the Gospel! What can God bestow, which is not pledged and laid up in Jesus for all who cleave to Him in faith!

Reader! despise not such inestimable good. Barter it not for unsubstantial pleasures, which perish while you touch. What can present a rivalry? Is it the allurements of sense? They who grovel in such mire, sink to the level of the beasts and brutes. Are you tempted by the glittering bait of earthly honor—are you seeking to touch the pinnacle of human fame, and to receive the incense of poor man's applause? Do riches captivate? Bring forth the righteous scales. In one heap all these baubles. Pile them up high. Let all the glory of the world be gathered. In the other place "the unsearchable riches of Christ"—"the exceeding weight of glory"—"the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore"—"the righteous crown, which fades not away." Say, which scale prevails!

Sell not such wealth for a mere nothing. Suppose you gain these worldly trifles to the utmost limit of desire. Suppose your cup of honors, wealth, and sensual joys to overflow. How long will the possession please? Sickness—disease—

appear. Means of enjoyment fail. The airy phantom vanishes. The bubble bursts. Misery bewails, "I have grasped a shadow."

Let it be granted, that you quaff this goblet with strength unimpaired through years of marvelous extent. But what is the longest life?—a span—a hair'sbreadth—a vapor. What is your final profit? Think of the death-bed without hope—the grave without redemption—the judgment-seat without a plea for pardon—eternity without salvation—the soul departing without Christ. Think of the never-dying anguish—the tortures of the upbraiding conscience. Ah! the bitterness of the reflection, 'Once the cross was erected in my view, and Christ was preached, and heaven depicted. But I despised the Gospel-tidings. I bartered my soul, and scorned the heavenly portion.'

Remember, also, your choice is free. The tempter may tempt—but he cannot compel. Seductions may be strong—but motives to resist are stronger far. You are self-slain when you prefer the pottage to Christ. Jesus drags to light self-will as the misleading traitor, "You WILL not come unto me that you might have life." John 5:40. It is your deliberate cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Not Christ—not holiness—not heaven—but this world, and this world's flimsy tinsel. Esau speaks once more. It is a voice of keenest anguish. Rebekah and Jacob conspire to rob him of his father's blessing. When he knew his loss, "he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. Have you but one blessing, O my father? bless me,

even me also, O my father; and Esau lifted up his voice, and wept." Genesis 27:34-38. It is now too late. "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. 12:17.

The hour will come when the door of mercy will be shut—when the gates of blessing can no more open—when prayer is no more heard—when wrestling entreaties avail nothing—when tears no more can move, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Prov. 1:28. But that day is not yet fully come. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Rev. 3:20. Open quickly. Tomorrow it may be too late. Another call invites you. Heed it. Oh, heed it. It may be the last.

REBEKAH

"Upon me be your curse, my son."

Genesis 27:13

God's Word is a rich treasure. The value reaches its pinnacle, when we believe surely that each sentence is the Spirit's gift. Proofs of this are large and perfect. But there are incidental evidences of the Bible's truthfulness, which are of wondrous worth. These should be diligently sought and dearly prized. They add stability to faith. Among these transparent honesty is not the least. The characters, moving across its stage, are not arrayed in unreal robes. They are not exhibited in imagination's garbs. They shine not in fictitious beauty. They soar not above the level of mortality. They appear as men and women born in the family of a fallen race. As we read, we feel this story is truth's record. An inventive pen would probably have decked the patriarchs in superhuman excellence. They would be shown as almost gods on earth. At least, no failings would be made conspicuous. Their walk would not be stumbling. No falls would soil their robes with mire. But the plain candor of the Book depicts them as they really were. Thus Abraham errs and errs again. He stoops to low subterfuges, which heroes of a fabulous romance would scorn. Isaac follows, and in a life of calm

repose betrays, that, with his father's grace, he had his father's faults.

Rebekah, partner of his deceit at Gerar, conspires to deceive her husband, well in age. Jacob's career is foul with dishonest subtleties. These are indisputable marks of a true narrative.

These sins, also, stand out prominently as signals. They prove how surely Satan will assail God's sons—that no high walk is higher than his shafts can reach—that no heart is so armed with grace as to be invulnerable to his wiles. They cry, 'let saints beware of grievous falls.' They warn, as rocks against which many a gallant vessel has perilously dashed—as quicksands entangling the unsuspecting crew—as vipers lurking in a verdant path—as foes concealed in secret ambush—as pitfalls in the upward road. These are monuments proclaiming the foe's triumphs and man's weakness. We read in them, "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity"—Ps. 39:5. They endear, also, that precious blood, in which the believer washes his every act—his every word—his every thought. Then the stains become white, yes, whiter than the newly fallen snow.

Thus we approach Rebekah's grievous sin. Old age, with stealthy step, has overtaken Isaac. Decrepitude prevails. The keen eye is dim. Objects are involved in mist. The sight is clouded in imperfection.

Reader! become familiar with the inward sight of Christ. Live gazing with rapturous faith on the Invisible. He will not withdraw, when outward sense decays. His countenance most brightly shines, when need is greatest. Darkening nature intercepts not heavenly rays. The sightless Isaac thinks of his earthly end. The priestly office is his right. He must discharge it, and pronounce the priestly blessing.

We see the type of Jesus. He came to bless. He lived to bless. As the true High Priest He ascends with blessings falling from His lips. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them." Luke 24:50. Happy the parent, who bequeaths a legacy of blessing! Happy children, who receive the rich inheritance of blessing!

Good and holy is Isaac's wish to bless. Self-willed—presumptuous—ungodly is his resolve to bless him, whom God had not blessed. His heart disposed him to prefer his eldest, Esau. The venison pleased the palate. But he had heard God's clear decree, "The elder shall serve the younger." In his own case the elder, Ishmael, had been put aside. He knew, also, that Jacob had obtained the birthright. But paternal fondness tempts him, and he strives against Divine arrangement.

Esau is sent forth in haste to kill the deer—to dress the dainty dish, and then to kneel before the blessing patriarch. When will vain man learn to bow in reverence before God's counsels? If He decrees, not all the wisdom of the

wise—not all the shrewdness of the shrewd—not all the cunning of the crafty—not all the might of the most mighty can negate—"From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do. No one can reverse my actions." Isaiah 43:13. If He speaks, result is sure. All power is His. All creatures are instruments to execute His will. This truth is engraven on the marvelous sequel. Dark lines proclaim man's grievous errors, and God's prevailing mind.

Rebekah overhears the patriarch's converse. She marks the speed of Esau to the field. Uneasiness assails her startled mind. What! shall the paternal blessing rest on Esau's head! What! shall he thus be raised in power and dignity above Jacob! Can I prevent? Yes. There is time. The means are mine. The means, indeed, are artifice and deceit; but they will help the destined end.

She reasons—she resolves—she half persuades herself, that sin is no sin, and deceit no deceit, if ultimate good shall be the issue.

Alas! how blinding is the devil's power! How tremendous is his skill to smooth the downward path! How easily he dresses evil in the garb of right! He insinuates the falsehood, "that ends may sanctify the means—that no plan can be wrong, by which right is subserved."

Rebekah's willing steps are snared. She quickly finds Jacob. Success depends upon speediness. *How many fall, because there is no pause for thought.* Reflection oftentimes

brings escape. She relates her husband's purpose. She states her plot to outwit. Who will not tremble, when they see a mother tempting, and a son entrapped? The wary Jacob at first hesitates. He scruples, not because the deceit is hateful to his soul—not because he loathes the crime of cheating an aged parent—not because of impious presumption in diverting God's purposes from their own channel—but lest *detection* should unmask him—lest failure should ensue—lest, discovered by natural unlikeness to his brother, he should not only lose the blessing, but should be blasted by a curse. He hates not the sin, because it is sin; but he mistrusts it, lest it should not prosper. He will embrace the viper, if it has no latent sting.

Rebekah, intent to carry out her scheme, presents her head to bear the curse. The dreadful words are heard, "Upon me be your curse, my son—Help me, and if sufferings come they shall be mine." She persists, reckless of the future. How truly is *sin's path a rapid rushing down a steep descent!*

No further hesitation checks. The treacherous project progresses. The goats are slain. The savory food is prepared. Jacob is masked in clothing not his own. His hands are roughened by the skins of goats. His neck is similarly disguised. Thus he draws near. His lips tremble, "My father." Isaac, surprised at the quick return, replies, "Here am I—who are you, my son?" Then the bold lie is heard, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." Genesis 27:19. Alas! that

words so false should fearlessly be uttered! When once the sluice is opened, impetuous torrents have resistless course. A small spark falls, and wide-spread conflagration blazes. Lies must be hid by lies. Truth's path forsaken can hardly be regained. *Sin speeds with lightning speed.*

The father marvels and, inquires, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" How daring is impiety! The holy name of God is now brought in to bolster up the fraud, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me." The cautious parent desires evidence, that Esau is before him. His eyes help not. But he desires to test by feeling. The skins deceive. But still the voice betrays. Therefore the clear question is clearly put, "Are you my very son Esau." Genesis 27:24.

Ah! what a moment! Will he persist in this unfilial treachery? Will he add sin to sin? Will he upraise the topstone to this pyramid of evil? Will he lay darker colors on this base iniquity? Will not his heart relent? Will he not loathe his vileness and retract? Ah! no. The barrier is crossed. He rushes onward. "Are you my very son Esau? and he said, I am." The father, no longer doubtful, eats of the food, and drinks of the offered goblet. He invites his child to the paternal caress, "Come near now, and kiss me my son." His heart is cheered. His spirit is revived. In flow of glowing language he heaps the mightiest blessings on the deceiver's head—Genesis 27:28, 29.

Still, Gods purposes prevail. The blessing was decreed to Jacob. On Jacob it fully falls. Thus in a dense maze of

human evil, heaven's plan is furthered. There is much to perplex and to distress, but one fact remains intact. God must be true. No vileness on man's part can intercept the current of his settled plans. The mother's hateful sin is not the less—sin must be sin, whatever be the motive and result; but *sin, however grievous, will form no barrier to God's arrangement.*

In after days, when God's pity planned relief to the parched sons of Israel, Moses received direct command to take his rod, and to speak to the rock before their eyes. It was promised that the yielding stone should pour forth streams obedient to the *voice*. Moses impatiently adopts his own course. He follows the angry dictates of his own course. He is not content to act submission. He *smites* the rock. He smites it twice. He speaks, moreover, but in terms of passion, to the rebel people. Thus Moses sinned. But will his sin hold back the destined mercy? Will the camp lose the blessing? No. God's pity is still pitiful. The waters flow. The thirsty are refreshed. But Moses must bear his sin. His feet shall never tread the promised land. Bye-ends intercept not Jacob's promised blessings.

Reader! take warning. *Leave God to work His will in His own way.* Take not the rudder from His hand. Anticipate not; but meekly follow. His ways are always right. So is His time always the best. "If the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Hab. 2:3. If Samuel lingers, let not Saul usurp his office. To wait is wisdom. Impatience frets to evil. Tear up each root of

doubt. The noxious weed will quickly spread, and raise a crop of trouble.

If Rebekah had meekly paused—if in submissive patience she had calmly left the matter to her God, the blessing would have been most sure. Her conscience would have received no wound. Following troubles would not have saddened her last days. Now what sorrows come! Esau, enraged at the deceit, proclaims his purpose to slay the supplanter. He only pauses until death closes the eyes of Isaac. He thinks the time is very near. "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." Genesis 27:41.

The affrighted mother plans to remove her much-loved son. She hurries him beyond the reach of murderous design. She counsels him to flee to Laban. She thinks the absence will be brief. "Tarry with him a few days, until your brother's fury turn away." Genesis 27:44, but were the days few? He wears out weary years in hard service. Aged Rebekah must lie down and die. In her decline no son is near to cheer. Her dying eye rests not on the beloved face. His voice soothes not. He is far off. He has indeed the blessing; but the mother sees him no more. If she had fully trusted God, how joyous might her last hours have been!

Jacob deceives; but frauds pursue him. In the house of Laban he is the victim of a wily scheme. In his declining years his sons conspire to cheat him. He had used the skins of goats to delude, so the blood of goats is used to mislead

him—Then Joseph's brothers killed a goat and dipped the robe in its blood. They took the beautiful robe to their father and asked him to identify it. "We found this in the field," they told him. "It's Joseph's robe, isn't it?" Their father recognized it at once. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A wild animal has attacked and eaten him. Surely Joseph has been torn in pieces!" Genesis 37:31-33.

It is a solemn word, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Numb. 32:23.

Sometimes the scourge proclaims its mission. The punishment bears inscription of the offence. It tells loudly the evoking cause. In her son's death the conscious mother saw deserved wrath. "Are you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" 1 Kings 17:18. Adonibezek, maimed as he had maimed others, piteously wails, "As I have done, so God has requited me." Judges 1:7. Mark the end of Jezebel. She had caused dogs to lick the blood of Naboth, and in the self-same place her blood is licked by dogs. David sins foully, and foul evil soon pollutes his house. He sins in resolving boastfully to parade his nation's numbers. Immediately a pestilence sweeps seventy thousand of his subjects from the earth. Haman plots Mordecai's death. A lofty gallows is upraised. Who is the victim? Who dies there in ignominy? The king, enraged with Haman, issues the mandate, "Hang Haman thereon." Esther 7:9. There is a guilty church, drunk with the blood of saints. What is the cup which it must shortly drain? It is the cup of blood. "You are just in sending this judgment, O Holy One, who is and who

always was. For your holy people and your prophets have been killed, and their blood was poured out on the earth. So you have given their murderers blood to drink. It is their just reward." Rev. 16:5-6.

Reader! be wise. Seek only to know God's will. Strive only to walk in His way. *In devious paths misery lurks.* Happy the walk when holy means conduce to holy ends! Let God's commands be our one motive—His word our rule—His Spirit our guide—His glory our aim. So only can we hear the glad welcome, "Well done!"

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN

They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."

Genesis 42:21

Sin is altogether vile. Its mildest look is loathesomness. It always frowns a hideous monster. Its weakest breath is poison. Its feeblest step treads down God's lovely law. But guilt has shades. Iniquity has diversities of stature. In some sins we see the crimson dye—the giant form—the condensation of all evil. They seem the cage, in which all foul birds flutter—the field, in which all weeds rankle. In this class are ranked the violations of nature's ties—transgressions against domestic bonds. Such enormity is full-grown in Cain. His hands are stained with the blood of his mother's son. It frightfully reappears in Joseph's brethren.

Reader! we must not shun this hateful picture. But it is sweetly relieved. A halo of Gospel-light surrounds it. Joseph suffers cruelly. Sin acts its direst part. But at every turn Jesus shines forth. We loathe the evil, while bright foreshadowings of salvation's scheme intermingle holiest

delight. In this study faith weeps and joys. The Beacon saddens, while the interwoven Gospel cheers.

The opening story names Joseph as his father's dear delight. "Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children." Genesis 37:3. He was the first-born of Rachel—his heart's joy. The birth was late, when hope had almost ceased to hope. Attractive qualities, also, made the youth more dear. The pious love commands all praise. But its display was ill-considered. In fallen nature passions soon lose just balance.

The brothers mark this *partiality*. The sight is wormwood to their suspicious minds. The parent's preference kindles their jealousy. Dry leaves flare when a slight spark falls.

They hate him, also, because their vicious conduct finds no congeniality in him. He shuns their evil and complains.

Instantly the type shows Jesus. The Father's voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son." Matt. 3:17. The Spirit witnesses, "Your holy child Jesus." Acts 4:27. "You love righteousness and hate iniquity." Ps. 45:7.

Reader! it is well to treasure up each indication of our Lord—"the chief of ten thousand, the altogether lovely One." He sparkles throughout Scripture, as stars in the clear skies.

Soon a fond act augments the discontent. The father decks him in a coat of many colors. They err not, who discern a

mystic meaning in this robe. Reuben had vilely sinned. The birthright was revoked. Jacob's desire gives it to his Rachel's first-born. The robe—the emblem of the first-born's privilege— seems to announce this. In it the brothers saw the pre-eminence of the younger—Their aversion strengthens. Their tones—their words—betray their spite. "They could not speak peaceably unto him." Genesis 37:4. Behold our High Priest appears in His priestly garb! "In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man clothed with a garment down to the foot." Rev. 1:13. "All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." Ps. 45:8.

Next, in the visions of the night a marvel is revealed. While reaping with his brothers, his sheaf exalts its head—their sheaves make lowly reverence. He relates this dream. The obvious meaning embitters the previous enmity. They reply, "Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" Genesis 37:8. The waters of bitterness rise higher. Again, we see our blessed Jesus—we hear the adversaries' proud rejection, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Luke 19:14.

Another vision quickly follows. The foreshadowing is the same. The colors are more clear. The sun—the moon—and the eleven stars bow before him. This also he divulges. The breach is widened. The envy maddens.

Soon the evil passions find vent. The brothers remove their flocks to distant pasture. Jacob sends Joseph to bring tidings of their welfare. He is directed to their tents at

Dothan. He there hastens. They discern him afar off. They perceive their opportunity. Satan, also, knew his time. He enters mightily into their ready hearts. He suggests. They yield. They plot to slay him. Thus the Jews took counsel to put Jesus to death. They exclaim, "Behold this dreamer comes?" Again the antitype appears, "This is the heir, come let us kill him." Matt. 21:38. They resolve to cast him into some pit. They jeer, "We shall see what will become of his dreams." The counterpart is seen at Calvary. "You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself." Matt. 27:40. "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross." verse 42. "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." verse 49. They plan a murder to defeat the dreams. Their sin promotes fulfillment. The Jews thus purposed Christ's destruction. They murder, and thus verify the types—the prophecies—and the final triumph. Reuben desires to save him. He resists not openly. He suggests expedient to deliver. Pilate similarly knew that the Chief Priests had delivered Him for envy, and weakly strove to rescue. They strip Joseph of his coat. So the crude soldiers take Christ's garments. In vain the youth beseeches. Keen is the anguish of his heart. They pitilessly disregard. He implores. They are obdurate, and cast him barbarously into the pit.

Again we hear the voice of Jesus. "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness and in the deeps." Ps. 88:6. Again we see deliverance. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit." Ps. 40:2. Through the good hand of God the pit is dry. Thus instant death is averted. The heartless

brothers sit down to eat and drink. The cruel Jews, in hard unconcern, "sitting down watched him there." Matt. 27:36.

Now merchants appear journeying towards Egypt. Judah reasons, our brother dying in the pit is gainless. His blood, also, will accuse. To sell him is a present profit and less guilt. He will live, and we, unstained by blood, shall be enriched. Consent is ready. The bargain is soon made. Twenty silver coins are paid. Joseph is carried down to Egypt. Who can see Judah's covetous desire, and not discern the traitor Judas!

They, who cared little for the tears of Joseph, next hasten to agonize their father. They dip the coat in blood. They carry it to Jacob. They bid him mark the stains, and to conclude a probable event. How hardening is sin! How downhill is its rapid course! The guilty brothers are more guilty sons. Unmoved at Joseph's misery, they are callous at their parent's woe. They will add patricide to their guilt. They care not to bring down Jacob's aged hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Let the sequel of the youthful exile rapidly be marked. In his afflictions God extends His overruling hand. Jesus, also, shows His ever-present image. Egypt is reached. A sale is readily effected. An officer of the king becomes possessor of the captive. It soon appears that he is rich in heavenly favor. Prosperity, as a shadow, follows his steps. Hence, to trust him is his master's wisdom.

Faith is ever sorely tried. He is solicited to vile iniquity. But Satan pierces not his grace-armed heart. Revengeful crinations follow. Into the dungeon he is cast. Here the blessed Jesus appears "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His pure blamelessness scares not the tempter. Every Satanic art is tried. But still the pure Conqueror is defamed, as a "tax-collector and sinner." "They laid to my charge things that I knew not." Ps. 35:11.

In the prison God deserts not His servant. Blessings can visit dungeons. Mercy can enter, when bolts and bars impede. Among the prisoners there are two of note—servants of the royal household. Each dreams a dream in the same night. Joseph interprets. In accordance, one is hanged, the other is restored to honor in the court. Is not Jesus thus "numbered with transgressors?" Is he not uplifted between two culprits?—one dies in hardened guilt—the other—wondrous trophy of the Cross—is snatched from perdition, and borne in triumph to the kingdom.

God sends a dream to Pharaoh. He is greatly troubled. The wise men of the land are baffled. They find not the meaning. Joseph's skill is now remembered. He is summoned. He unfolds the mystery of the night vision. He tells of coming plenty, and succeeding famine. He wisely counsels, let stores be gathered, and provision made. Pharaoh perceives his vast endowments. He exclaims, "Can we find such a one as this is—a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Genesis 41:38. Of Jesus we read, "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." John 3:34.

Joseph is raised to loftiest pre-eminence. The scepter of the realm is in his hands. The king makes him "Lord over all his house, and ruler over all his substance." Ps. 105:21. He sits in the highest seat. All knees must bow before him. Thus Jesus passes from the prison and the grave to the right hand of the Majesty on high. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." Is. 9:6. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Ps. 2:6. He proclaims, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28:18. The Spirit teaches, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:10-11.

Pharaoh divests not himself of all authority. "Only in the throne will I be greater than you." Genesis 41:40. Here we see the glorious consummation. The mediatorial kingdom will have a close. The purposes of grace will be completely accomplished. "Then comes the end and he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. 15:28.

Happy for Egypt that Joseph ruled! Happy, thrice happy for the Church, that Jesus holds the scepter. On His throne He orders all things for supremest benefit. The earthly scene often seems perplexed. Confusion and disorder weave a tangled web. But the rule is in a mighty hand. He

guides all providences to accomplish good. No sparrow falls, but by His will; and soon adoring lips will gratefully proclaim, "He has done all things well." Mark 7:37.

Joseph's especial work is to distribute food. When famine grimly stalks throughout the land—when the staff of life is broken—when means of relief all fail—the royal mandate is, "Go unto Joseph—what he says to you, do." Genesis 41:55.

Thus Jesus feeds His flock. His open treasure-house fills the hungry with good things. He cries. "Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isa. 55:2.

He provides all viands for the needy. It is far easier to count the ocean's sands, than to calculate the never-failing plenty of His table. Pre-eminently He gives Himself—"My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." John 6:55. Faith is the eye which sees this nourishment—the hand which takes it—the palate which digests it. Away with the monstrous figment of imagination—that carnal lips press divine substance. The very thought is childish superstition. Let reason, scripture, and experience speak. They all reject such pitiful absurdity. Faith only knows the mystery of the God-man's body broken on the cross—the God-man's blood shed to atone. The new-born soul feasts spiritually, and is strengthened. Thus the true Joseph deals out celestial stores. "I am that Bread of Life." John 6:48.

Crowds hasten to Egypt's one store-house. But though earth teems with need, few will apply to Jesus. In Joseph's

day, the way is long, and the journey is beset with perils. But hunger impels, and they delay not. To famished sinners the feast is spread before their very door. Still they will not stir and take. The food in Egypt must be bought. The Gospel-feast is "without money and without price." The invitation sounds, "Eat, O friends, drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved." Song 5:1.

The famine spreads beyond the Egyptian confines. It enters the tents of Jacob. Ghastly hunger sits at his table. The tidings come that grain abounds in Egypt. Jacob, retaining his Benjamin, sends forth his sons. They are suppliants to Joseph. He recognizes them, though they discern him not. Thus Jesus knows and ever knew his own. His eye yearns over them in love, while they are ignorant of Him. Joseph deals roughly with them. Jesus oftentimes seems hard and harsh, while mercy is His real design. They are accused. They are immured in prison for three days. Their awakened consciences now sting. In their punishment, they read their former crime. Their sin finds them out. It grasps them with giant's grasp. They say one to another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." Genesis 42:21.

Reader! see how past sins revive, and burst their long-closed tombs, and shake accusing heads, and tell their frightful tale, and prove that they are linked to everlasting wrath. The marvelous story ends marvelously. Jacob, and Benjamin, and all the patriarch's house stand humbly

before Joseph. They see in the outcast youth the savior of their race. The dreams are true. There is no failure in all God's wondrous design. Egypt becomes a refuge. Thus Jesus brings the children of His love to a sure shelter. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." Beneath the cross is everlasting safety. Goshen is, also, a school of discipline. Thus by wise trials saints are fitted for their glorious home. Hard service prepares them for the crown.

Reader! turn not from this story without loathing—hating—abhorring sin. Touch it not. It stains like pitch. Once done, it will pursue and hunt you down. But adhere to Jesus. See Him resplendent throughout the warning of this Beacon. Adore Him as all grace—all mercy—all compassion—all love—all righteousness—and all salvation. He, and He only, can make clean—He, and He only, can give pardon—He, and He only, can upraise to heaven."

DEATH

"And he died."
Genesis 5

This chapter celebrates the victories of DEATH. The conqueror unfolds his standard over a prostrate world. The chieftains of the elder age pass in review. DEATH meets them. They bow before him. Except Enoch, they all fall slain. DEATH plies his sting, and they cannot escape.

Reader! seek profit from this deathful page. The same destroyer still has like power. He tracks your steps. His eye rests on you. His dart is poised. He soon will overtake. His chilly hand will bear you away. Your life will cease. You will be numbered with the dead. The grave will cover you. You will moulder in the dust. The worms will have their food. Others will take your place. Your name will fade. The sun will rise, as before. Nature will still put on her blithesome robe. The birds will sing. The earth will bear her fruits. Man will go forth to toil—to pleasure and to sin. Your absence will make no lasting void. All will go on, as though you had never lived. Come, then, and be familiar with this leveler. Walk daily by his side. Let him be no stranger. Wise acquaintance turns his frowns to smiles. Grace makes this foe a precious friend.

Let us consider the womb which bore this mighty one. Whence came his being? In what cradle was he nursed? Who forged his fearful armor? Who braced him with such indomitable strength? Who gave him chains to bind all Adam's race? Who sent him forth resistless to subdue? At once a negative appears. Death forms no part of man's original. The first fabric had no flaw. It upraised its head grand in enduring life. It held no seed of imperfection or decay. Old age—decrepitude—disease—were not at first born with man's body. Mortality is not his necessary adjunct. Life possesses not in itself the ingredients of decline.

But life depended on a sinless course. It was the comrade of obedience. If disobedience intervened, there must be penalty. The penalty was death. "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die" [dying you shall die] Genesis 2:17, Man fell. Transgression soiled him. Mortality ensued. The beautiful frame lost its unfading youth. Dust it was, and now to dust it must return. See then the cause of death. Sin brought in this ruin. The sting—the barbed point—the conquering weapon—the relentless shaft of death, is sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin—and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned." Rom. 5:12.

Thus the poisonous stream is traced to its true source. The deep roots of the tree are found. The seed is seen, from which the withering crop springs. The culprit is detected and is dragged to light. Sin is the murderer. Sin worked the

woe. Pile in one mass the countless dead, from Abel to this hour, and ask, Who slew all these? The clear reply is, sin.

Reader! can you read this, and not abhor the monster. SIN is the cause of all the evil which this earth has seen. It is the parent of all the misery yet to come. No tear bedews the cheek—no sigh rends the heart—no pain gives agony—no anguish gnaws, but sin effectuates all. Sin digs each grave. Sin clothes all mourners with their weeds. It marred a fair creation. It marks your *body* for dissolution. Take heed, lest it be ruin to your *soul*.

Let us now analyze more closely the vast tyranny of sin's firstborn—DEATH. See its effects upon that marvelous machine, man's body. It touches. Its touch is ruin. Decomposition instantly ensues. The vital powers wither. Animation is extinct. Motion is fled. The limbs freeze into icy marble. The luster of the sparkling eye is dim. It has no sight. The smell discerns no fragrance. The ear is deaf to melody. We lift the hand—it falls. We pierce the skin—it is insensible to pain. Expression no more brightens in the wan look. The blood no longer flows in warm current. The pulse no longer proclaims vital glow. The "silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is broken at the fountain, the wheel is broken at the cistern." Eccles. 12:6. Decay invades the frame, and poisons it with effacing finger. The dearest friends shrink from the object of their tenderest love. Its presence cannot be endured. It must be buried out of sight. It must be hidden in kindred dust. Reader! yet a little while, death will turn you to this

corruption. "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Isa. 38:1.

See, then, the fruits of sin, and hate it as the origin of all woe. But limit not the thoughts of death to your own body. Take the widest range. View the whole race of man. Death tramples upon all. No station is too high for its assault. It hurls all monarchs from their thrones. No lowly hut escapes its entrance. It tears away the poorest from poverty's hardest bed. No genius can devise exemption. It annihilates the noblest intellect. It bears off the orator—the poet—the most skilled in arts and science—the hero from the battle-field—the statesman from the helm of empire. It respects not the hoary head. It strangles the infant at the mother's breast. It slays the bridegroom and the bride—the parent and the child—the merry and the sad. Its sway is universal. Within a century it extinguishes the earth of its inhabitants. Its ever-moving scythe knows no repose. Its sword has no scabbard.

It is, moreover, capricious in its work. When least expected, it is near. Sometimes it tarries long. No one can surely state the time—the place of its destroying-wound. Reader! "set your house in order, for you shall die and not live."

But is this malady without remedy? Is this a night which has no morn? Is there no light behind this cloud? Is there no help? None, if our view be limited to earth. But look off to Jesus. In Him there is all help. He is far mightier than this mighty tyrant. He can recover victims from his

grasp. He can snatch the prey from his fangs. He can snap his strongest chains. He can destroy the destroyer. He makes all His followers more than death's conquerors. He plants their feet upon his prostrate neck. He puts a new song into triumphant lips, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" 1 Cor. 15:55. Now in the house of pilgrimage the saints may cry in rapturous confidence, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." verse 57.

This background, black with such blackness, throws into dazzling light the Gospel triumph. But here all language fails. No tongue can speak the glories of our Jesus. No glowing touch can picture His excellence. It were easier for color to outshine the sun—or painter's art to eclipse the sparkling diamond—or voice to surpass the thunder's roar, than for words to celebrate the victory over death. But let us calmly view the work of Jesus, and receive His comfort.

He appears on earth. His path is bright evidence that He is more than man. In the long chain of proof, He exhibits death utterly subdued. The cases, probably, were not few. Enumerating His wonders to John's disciples, He adds, "the dead are raised up." Matt. 11:5. We read, also, that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. 27:52-53.

Ponder the instances which are specifically given. The Spirit records them, as a cordial to our faith. May His power put life into the narrative!

JAIRUS had a youthful daughter. At tender age she sickens. While the afflicted father implores help, he hears that death has done its work. Surely now all hope is fled! Jesus replies, "Be not afraid, only believe." Mark 5:36. He adds, "She is not dead, but sleeps." The weepers know that life is gone. They laugh Him to scorn. Jesus reaches the lifeless bed. He takes the stiffened hand. He speaks, "little girl, I say unto you, Arise." Exert yourself, O death. Now, show your power. Retain your victim if you can. Brief is the conflict. Death yields. "Immediately, the little girl arose, and walked." Mark 5:42. Let faith crown the victor. He stands death's conqueror.

Again, when He draws near to NAIN'S gates He meets a mournful train. A young man is carried out, the only son of his mother, and she is a widow. Jesus speaks omnipotently, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise." Luke 7:14. Death cannot hinder. His shackles break. "He who was dead sat up and began to speak." Crown Him again. Death is a stricken captive in His mighty hands.

Once more, LAZARUS is sick and dies. He is carried to his rocky cave. Jesus returns. He commands, "Take away the stone." They remonstrate, that death had preyed upon its victim for four days, and that decay had done its work. Jesus cries loudly, "Lazarus, come forth." Death cannot counteract. The mandate compels obedience. Death

relaxes its grasp. "He who was dead came forth." John 11:44. Crown Him again.

These instances confirm the fact, that Jesus is mighty to hurl death from his tyrannical throne—to shatter his fetters—to tread down his power. At His bidding the lifeless live again. A stronger proof remains. JESUS must die in His people's stead. In all things He must be their substitute—drink their cup—pay their penalty—occupy their place. Therefore He voluntarily yields to death. He bows the head and gives up the spirit. But through death He destroys him that had the power of death. Mark the outcome. If death has prevailing power, let it now be shown. Jesus is within its prison. Let death bar fast the gates—rivet the chains— detain its captive—display supremacy. It fails. It is conspicuously defeated. Jesus holds its boasted prowess in derision. It was not possible that He should be held by it. He strides forth from the tomb. He tramples down opposing barriers. He shows Himself again alive by many infallible proofs. Hear the victor's shout, "I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave." Rev. 1:18

Adore Him by His title, LIFE. Life is the opposite to death. They cannot coexist. Where one appears the other flees. But Jesus proclaims, "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25. The Spirit responds, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:4. Thus He who is essential life, is life to His believing flock. He graciously repairs all traces

of decline. No, His restoration infinitely exceeds the loss. Did sin destroy life in the soul? Are we by nature "dead in trespasses and sins?" He quickens and renews. While we are in our blood, He says unto us, 'Live.'

By His Spirit He imparts new faculties—new energies—new being—new desires. The EYE, once dark, now opened, sees the wonders of the heavenly world—discerns things as they really are—admires God's glory, and the preciousness of Christ—and reads the significance of the Book of books. The EAR, once deaf, now hears the Spirit's call, and drinks in all the glorious promises, and listens to the Shepherd's guiding voice. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life." John 10:27. The FEET, once fast in fetters of insensibility, now alert and active, run in the way of Gospel-rule, and climb unwearied the high hill of Zion, and continue steadfast to the end. The PALATE, once insensible to the Gospel-feast, now has quick relish for the heavenly manna. The blessed ones hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they are filled. Thus, while "the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. 8:10. In Christ we spiritually live.

Consider the body. Here Jesus changes death's whole aspect. He dissolves its power. He takes away all icy terror from its sure approach. Death is no more a dreaded foe. It comes as a welcome friend. It is a jewel in the believer's casket. "All things are yours, life and *death*." It brings tidings that the chariot is ready to convey to endless rest—that the weary pilgrimage is ended—that Jesus is waiting

to receive—that the ready mansions are prepared to welcome. Death is no loss to those whose life is Christ. Paul felt the truth, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:21. To depart and to be with Christ is far better. But who can tell what gain? who can measure the length and breadth of the far better! Death opens the cage-door, and the liberated spirit flies to the sight of Jesus. It dissolves the detaining clay, and instantly the spirit is in Paradise. It touches, and its touch is never-ending bliss. Thus Jesus is our Life. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all His benefits." Ps. 103:1.

But the triumph of triumphs is not yet told. The consummating scene comes on speedily. Then will believers raise victorious heads. Their earthly frames will spring forth from their graves. A voice—a mighty voice—the voice of Jesus shall call, and they shall stand again on earth, a living multitude in living bodies. But oh! how changed! All traces of sin, and sin's hideousness, and sin's deformity, and sin's infirmity are forever gone. Corruption—dishonor—weakness disappear. Incorruption—glory—power, reign. The natural body is now spiritual—"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. Where is death? It is completely vanquished. It is utterly abolished. It is swallowed up in victory. "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Rev. 20:14.

Thus believers in resurrection-robcs inherit life—the life of immortality—the life of glory—the life of blessedness

in the presence of God and of the Lamb. Who will not love, and bless, and serve this great Redeemer—this glorious Conqueror—our thrice-precious Jesus! How perfect is His work! Its pinnacle cannot be higher. What adorations can we adequately render! Let every breath be praise. Let our few days on earth be wholly a thank-offering. Let our one study be to magnify His name. How little is all life-long service when weighed against the debt! But by the Spirit's help, let all we can do be most gladly done. And while abounding in the work of the Lord, let us ascribe all strength—all pardon—all salvation to free grace! The happiest pilgrimage on earth is living out of self, in Christ, to God—in sight of heaven—in hope of glory—smiling at death, and realizing endless life. Hallelujah! Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

**THIS E-BOOK HAS BEEN COMPILED BY THE BIBLE
TRUTH FORUM**